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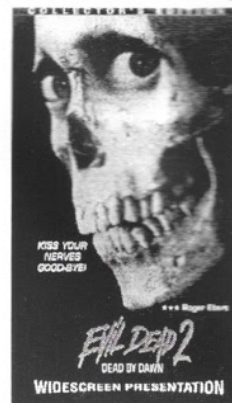
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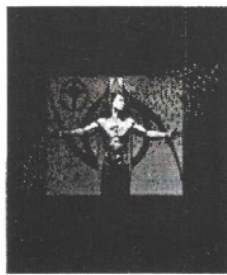
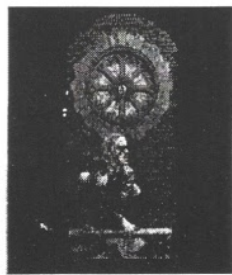
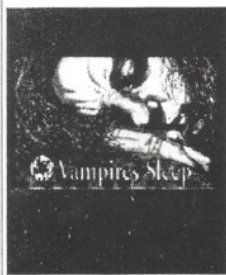
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COVER: HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1944) and HOUSE OF DRACULA (1945)

Scarlet Letters

Thanks for a really (overly) flattering writeup in *Scarlet Street* #33. Larry Talbot thanks you, his father thanks you, Maria thanks you—and most importantly, I thank you.

Oh—and a great issue, besides, not only brimming with “stuff” but also really well-designed. Loved the flip-of-the-Lewton hat with the paw prints across the page . . .

Jeff Rovin
New York, NY

If there are any Scarlet Streeters out there who haven't yet read Jeff Rovin's terror-ific Return of the Wolf Man (Berkley Boulevard Books), whaddaya waiting for—the full moon? You're missing a big treat and Berkley's made a great big mistake not having Jeff continue the series.

I don't know what I was thinking, but I erred in attributing CHINATOWN SQUAD to composer Karl Hajos (*Scarlet Street* #33, BITTEN ON THE KEYS). That film's original music was composed by James Dietrich, who also wrote the original music in the 1932 THE MUMMY.

Richard H. Bush
Meriden, CT

Just thought I'd write to give you my take on GODS AND MONSTERS, the film on the life of director James Whale. (*Scarlet Street* #30) First off, I am a Moderate Republican, heterosexual, Rush Limbaugh fan who wanted to see the film because I am a big fan of thirties Universal Horror movies and, let's face it, James Whale's films were the class of the decade. When in the film he tells the young interviewer the rest of the Frankenstein films were made by hacks, I said aloud, “Amen!”

I had small hope of seeing the film at a theater, because all the screens show the latest big-budget films. I even asked the manager if he was going to get the film and was informed that the film would not play at the local cineplex. But it was not his fault, as the films are selected by other people, and it was not because of the film's subject (James Whale's sexual choice) because BOOGIE NIGHTS had played there and that wasn't exactly a family film. So I just waited for the film to be re-released on video cassette.

In the meantime, I read reviews of the film and overheard people talking about it and saying it contained some shocking scenes. When I finally rented the video, I must say the film contained many shocking things. First off, I was totally set back by the intelligent and original story. I could not believe I was watching a film that I wasn't two or three steps ahead of guessing what was going to happen next. Also, it contained

something all film fans hear about but almost never expect to see: great acting. And what really floored me was the crisp and witty dialogue. Not the usual smug one-liners, but real dialogue on a par with the best of TWIN PEAKS. I must say GODS AND MONSTERS shocked me to the core.

Perhaps it is best it didn't play at the local mall theater. It would have been misunderstood or simply called boring, since no real monster knocked down any buildings and no Death Star was blown up at the end. As for all the commotion about the film being controversial, if I trimmed the nude swim in the pool and a few slang words for male genitalia I could have shown the film at my church!

One thing the film did not point to and I saw was when Clay (Brendan Fraser) said he was not James Whale's Monster. I say he was James Whale's Monster—a big hulk of a man with a kind heart underneath. But just as straight people see gay men in stereotypical terms, so does James Whale see Clay in the same way—as a big, strong, heterosexual, dumb jock, all muscle and no brain and therefore not capable of truly loving someone for what they are inside. That would ironically make Mr. Whale one of the angry, torch-bearing villagers of his Frankenstein movies, not understanding that which is different. A lot to think about from a small-budget film with plenty of ideas instead of C.G.I. effects . . .

Larry Summerson
Revovo, PA

I had the fine opportunity to see GODS AND MONSTERS during the Chicago Film Festival run here in Chicago. The di-



rector, Bill Condon, was there and spoke a few words before the film began. The film was wonderful and was chock full of laughs. As we made to leave, I noticed that one row back sat Count Dracula himself—Christopher Lee. I didn't bother him, but felt pleased that he attended this showing as part of the voting jury panel.

The friend I attended with knew nothing of James Whale, but now I believe he is very appreciative of Mr. Whale, his films, and his being out back then.

As we headed for his car, a vehicle full of ignorant thugs shouted “fucking faggots” and lobbed a fast-food drink at us. (Missed by a mile.) My friend replied, “Fuck you” and I grabbed him by his arm, as he wanted to pursue the matter. (This was just weeks after the Matthew Shepherd murder.)

Since then, a friend was gay bashed and just last night a car drove by me and a girl called me a “fruitcake.” I hollered back, “That's right, honey, and damn proud of it!”

I'm sorry; I know anger doesn't help, but I for one am going to start arming myself—a belt with a heavy buckle, a brick in my backpack. We have to watch out for ourselves and defend each other.

I just had to get this out. I don't mean to sound sour; I'm just wishing that we might find a little heaven here on Earth. Thanks for being a fine publication that recognizes the gay community as part of its audience. You help to bring a little heaven to me with each issue.

Hugo Hernandez
Chicago, IL

What a nice surprise to see the late Ollie Reed holding his mother on your cover for *Scarlet Street* #33! Three of my favorite werewolves all in one issue! Ah, that's the way to warm my heart! So I had to take quill in claw and scratch you a few lines.

Scarlet Street has certainly been on a nice roll lately, always coming up with timely and great articles, particularly those by Ken Hanke and Lelia Loban, and of course regular Drew Sullivan.

WEREWOLF OF LONDON has always been close to my heart. Some of my fondest memories of my mother involve our regular watching of SHOCK THEATER (hosted by Mr. X on Channel Seven in Detroit). After WEREWOLF, we regularly enter-

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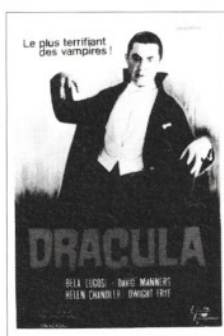
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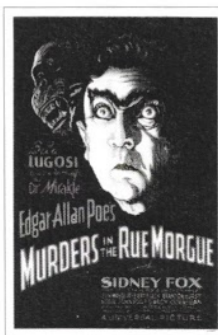
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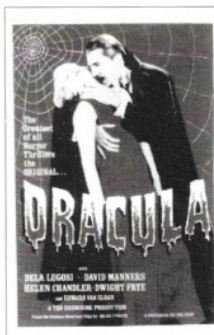
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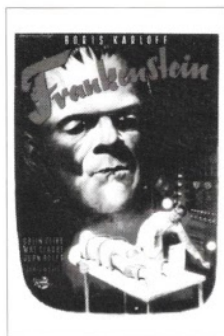
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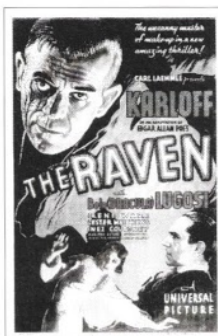
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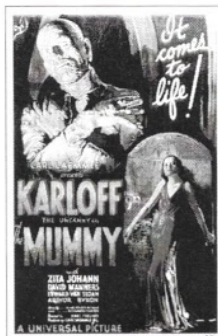
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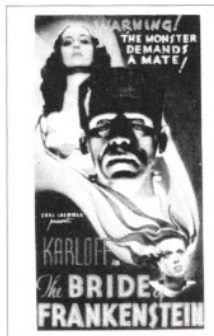
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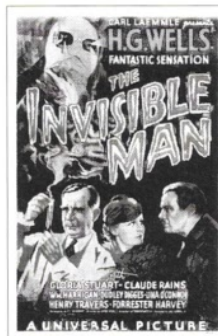
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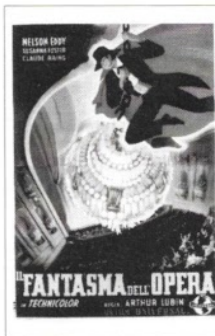
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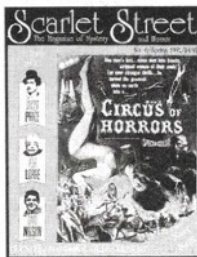
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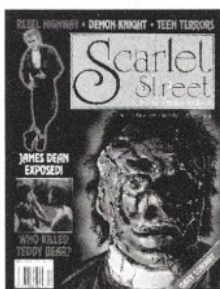
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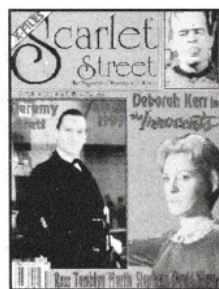
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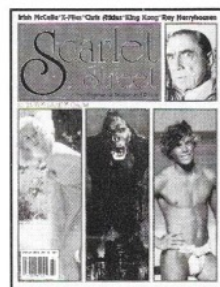
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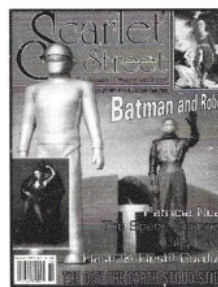
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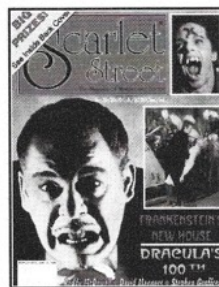
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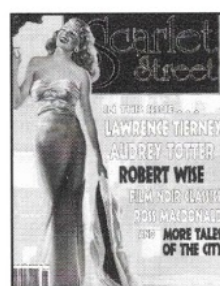
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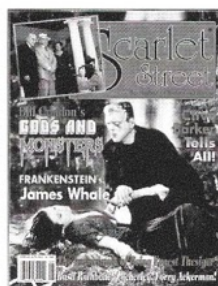
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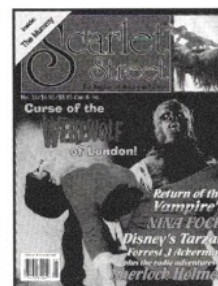
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from Page 4

tained friends with our mimicry of Ziffie Tilbury and Ethel Griffies (who trod the boards well into her eighties). We would don old hats with veils and do the whole scene. I don't think others found the scene as wonderful as we did (obviously, it failed to reach Mr. Hanke), but for years we'd crack each other up by looking at a stranger and muttering, "He has a secret sorrow." Ah, youth!

CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF is also dear to me. I would spend every Saturday at Toledo's Rivoli Theatre and my dad (who also loved horror movies, taking my mom to see Karloff's FRANKENSTEIN on their first date) would pick me up after I had been watching horror films all day. When I saw CURSE, Dad stayed. After we watched it through, Dad, always a good critic, said, "That one is something special," and predicted Oliver Reed "would be a big star." He was right on both counts and next day arranged with the manager of the theater to give me 8x10's from the film, launching me on a hobby I pursue to this day. None of that "parents ripping up copies of FM" for me!

I've always thought a remake of CURSE—or more properly, a closer adaptation of Guy Endore's seminal (so to speak) novel *The Werewolf of Paris*—would be perfect now that the psychosexual elements could be explored. It would be strong meat even today. I once wanted to try my hand at adapting it myself with a friend, but a search showed Universal had the rights locked down in perpetuity and Endore's widow was reluctant to fight for them (or so we heard). Universal should let Blackie Lagoon rest and try their hand at *Werewolf of Paris*. Or should they? They turned THE MUMMY into a roller coaster ride instead of featuring a single moment of creeping terror in a dark and silent lost tomb.

One other WEREWOLF OF LONDON memory of the past: while WEREWOLF's Henry Hull was not well known to fans (in spite of his memorable TOBACCO ROAD stint), he was known to me by his appearance. The Boy Scout Merit Badge series book on drama featured Hull in makeup for Edwin Drood, the Werewolf (both makeups) and Magwich, with such useful tips as "crushing one of your father's cigarettes and apply with spirit gum for a beard . . ."

Ah, youth, ah, fathers and mothers! And here's to a world of gods and monsters, all making regular stops on Scarlet Street . . .

Farnham Scott
Sunnyside, NY

It's a rare and beautiful thing to find a genre magazine with a genuine sense of humor about itself. Richard Valley's WITH PLenty OF MONEY AND HUGH parody of revisionism film criticism (much of which is available right in the pages of *Scarlet Street*) in the recent SS #33 was both slyly amusing and disconcertingly persuasive. I immediately watched WEREWOLF OF LONDON and I'm damned if his "theory" didn't actually make sense! Last month, I had the great pleasure of meeting Mr. Valley at the Monster Bash convention in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, and talking with him for some time in the dealers' room. I also attended his enlightening introduction to a showing of BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. Having now met the man behind what is without doubt the best publication on horror films, I can fully understand why *Scarlet Street* is always dependably educational and witty.

John Neilsen
Philadelphia, PA

Well, sometimes we're only half-witty, and sometimes nit-witty, but thanx, John. It was a pleasure meeting you, too. Hope to see you

at the two Monster Bash shows Ron "Rondo" Adams will be holding next year.

Just finished my first visit to your website and thought I'd tell ya'll how great I think it is . . . not that I'd expect anything less. By the by, in your latest issue (SS #33) there's a photo of Gerard "Superboy" Christopher on the letters page. Have you had an article on him I somehow overlooked? Synchronicity at work, I see the photo and then this past weekend I meet him at Dragon Con. Anyone who has gone to one of these conventions knows that the "stars" are there to, yes, meet the public, but basically also to make a buck. (Who can blame them?) And if some of these stars are a little standoffish and surly, okay, whatever . . . but Gerard seemed to be a truly sweet guy and took the time to talk to the kids and, ahem, adults that stopped by his table. Nice dude and, needless to say, much better looking in person. Helped make the con a little bit more fun, as did Yvonne Craig and that Veruca Salt chick and David Hedison . . .

Dreadens

Dreadens@concentric.net

You'll find a Gerard Christopher interview in *Scarlet Street* #4, which is still available (though admittedly a trifle pricey). In fact, we're getting a little low on early Streets, so if you collectors out there want a complete set (and who doesn't), well, now's the time to get 'em . . .

In John J. Mathews' most recent column (News Hound, SS #33), he mentions the death of Rory Calhoun (who died on April 27, 1999)—surely, one of the screen's greatest casualties, due to the fact that his apparent rise to stardom suddenly took a downward spiral and has always remained cloaked in mystery.

Continued on page 11

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Frankly Scarlet



Ever have a song stuck in your head? Worse, ever have one line of a song stuck in your head?

"What are we going to do about the younger generation," Keye Luke and Juanita Hall musically inquired in the stage and film versions of Rodgers and Hammerstein's FLOWER DRUM SONG. To be honest, I've never given the question very much thought. Even though I was born at the tail end of the first half of this fast-fading century, I stubbornly refuse to consider myself anything other than a member of the younger generation. (That gray tint to my beard is merely makeup for my celebrated Dr. Edelmann impression!)

Still young at 50, eh? How is that possible? Perhaps it's because, as I write this in late June, I'm surrounded by photos of Frankenstein's Monster, Dracula, The Wolf Man, The Creeper, and The Mad Doctor as played by (respectively) Glenn Strange, John Carradine, Lon Chaney Jr., Rondo Hatton, and Boris Karloff; on my left, I've interviews with Elena Verdugo, one of the stars of HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1944), and Jane Adams, one of the stars of HOUSE OF DRACULA (1945); on the right, I've the latest column from Forrest J Ackerman, the man who (with publisher James Warren) gave us *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, the most famous and beloved of all monster mags.

Why would that keep me young at heart? (Another song cue: Ol' Blue Eye's spectre must have floated over from Hoboken.) Well, it's probably because I first made friends with these frightful fiends and the folks who brought them to life and that *Famous* publication over 40 years ago, and my love for them hasn't diminished a jot in all those many, many, many years since. (Ouch! Doggone it, I may have used one too many "many's": I just felt a little arthritic pain in my trick knee.)

But what of the actual younger generation? Do they give a hoot or a holler about the classic movie monsters and stars? Well, at Ron Adams' recent Monster Bash convention in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, managing editor Tom Amorosi and I were headed to our room when we encountered an adorable little girl of four or five, her face aglow with excitement because (she explained to us), "My friend Frankenstein is downstairs!" (She was right, too; Frank Rios, a



Monsters have always been kid stuff, but kids come in all ages. Here, on the set of HOUSE OF DRACULA in 1945, big kid Lon Chaney Jr. pretends to be strangled by his son, 17-year-old little kid Lon III. Watching are John Carradine (in full Dracula drag), 15-year-old littlest kid Ronald Chaney, and Martha O'Driscoll. Sadly, Ronald died in 1990 at age 60 and Lon III died two years later in a car accident.

regular at East Coast shows, was all decked out as the Monster in a stunning makeup by Ron Chamberlain and posing with fans near the hotel swimming pool—within tossing distance of the pool, in fact, though later we again saw the little girl and she appeared to be quite dry and alive.)

As if that isn't positive sign enough, we have a special feature in this issue called THE TERRIBLE TEENS, where you'll find some surprising connections between two coming-of-age (and one coming-of-age-and-out) comedies and our beloved movie monsters.

Ah, it's good to be young! And that wasn't arthritis in my leg after all: I was just gearing up to do my celebrated impression of Tippi Hedren's mother in MARNIE. I'm famous for it . . .

It baffles science! It boggles the mind! Somehow or other, amidst all the articles associate editor Ken Hanke has been brilliantly churning out for *Scarlet Street* (is it possible to churn brilliantly?), he's managed to write a book with the extremely explanatory title of *Tim Burton: An Unauthorized Biography of the Filmmaker* (Renaissance Books, 1999).

Personally, I have mixed feelings about Burton—love his Edward films, SCISSOR-HANDS and WOOD, hate his Batmans—but Ken's insights into the man and his movies are sharp and, unlike many film scholars, he doesn't let his admiration for his subject blind him to Burton's faults. Too, his analysis of Burton's movies, which range from PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE to MARS ATTACKS!, add significantly to the reader's understanding of these films and may very likely spark a desire to track down the rest of the director's body of work. As with such

previous efforts as the indispensable *Charlie Chan at the Movies* (McFarland & Company, 1989) and his innovative articles for our beloved *Magazine of Mystery and Horror*, Ken's prose is such that he is never too academic to befuddle the average reader, and never too fannish to be superficial. In this day and age, when practically anyone regardless of talent can get a book in print via small press, Ken is one of those rare film writers whose work really deserves to be published.

And besides, he slipped me five bucks to say all this . . .

He's baa-aack! One of *Scarlet Street's* founding staffers has returned to the fold. (Frightfully appropriate, that word; in the early days of our peerless publication, we had to fold the damn thing ourselves!) John Brunas, one of the authors of the indispensable—did I use that word already to describe one of Ken's books? Well, the hell with it; it is—the indispensable *Universal Horrors* (McFarland & Company, 1990) is back with us as proofreader, fact checker, horror expert, and (hopefully) writer.

Speaking of Universal horrors, this issue we're dropping by two houses on the Street that are favorites with fright fans: HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN and HOUSE OF DRACULA. These were the last two titles in the Universal Frankenstein series before the man-made Monster went on to meet Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, and the first to bring all three of the studio's most famous fiends—The Monster, Dracula, and the Wolf Man—together.

And now on with the show . . .

Richard Valley

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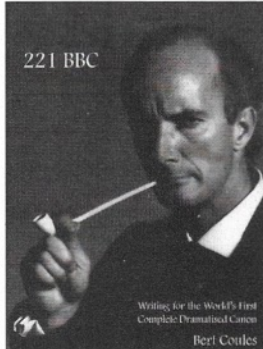
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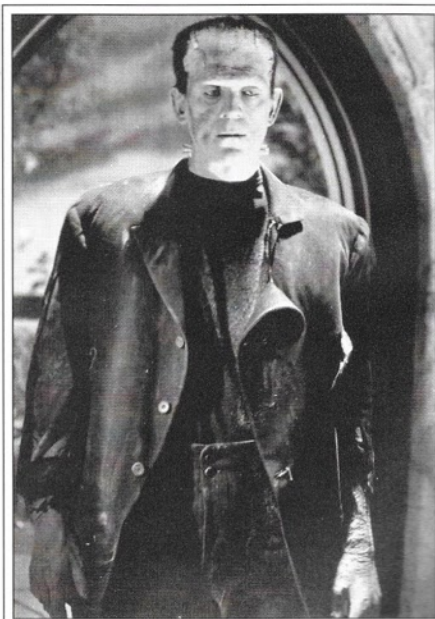
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 8

In Donald F. Reuter's *Heartthrob: A Hundred Years of Beautiful Men*, which ends with a magnificent photograph of Mr. Calhoun (aiming a bow and arrow—straight to moviegoers' hearts?), Mr. Reuter says, "The story goes that he was offered up as a sacrificial lamb to squelch revelatory rumors that fellow actor Rock Hudson was homosexual (which he was, of course). Whether or not the scandal (involving Rory's brush with the law) actually hurt his success is impossible to measure, although it is amazing that a man so drop-dead handsome did not become an even bigger star than he was."

In *Rock Hudson: His Story*, by Rock Hudson and Sara Davidson, Ms. Davidson says that *Confidential* magazine was desperate to expose Hudson's homosexuality and had even offered \$10,000—a great deal of money back in 1954—to one of his young lovers, Jack Navaar, but that the rumor at Universal-International was that the studio had traded an extremely damaging story about one of its stars, Rory Calhoun, which involved burglary and auto theft and a long sentence in a Federal reformatory, in order to kill the piece on Rock Hudson's private life. "But whether there was a connection," writes Ms. Davidson, "between the stories on Calhoun and the threatened expose of Rock cannot be confirmed."

According to *The New York Times* obituary, Rory Calhoun will probably be re-

membered best for his CBS television series *THE TEXAN*, where he played Big Bill Longley (a name he could not possibly get away with today), a man who fought injustice in the years that followed the Civil War. But to anyone who knows his movie career, Rory Calhoun will be remembered best for the films that he made from the mid-forties to the fifties, when, in the year that Universal-International decided to endanger and probably destroy his career, he appeared opposite Robert Mitchum and Marilyn Monroe in Otto Preminger's *RIVER OF NO RETURN* and practically walked off with the movie.

Raymond Banacki
Brooklyn, NY

Like *Famous Monsters of Filmland* in its Forry Ackerman years (and *Castle of Frankenstein* in its Calvin Beck), *Scarlet Street* is a magazine with a strong, distinct personality all its own. That personality belongs to its publisher and editor, Richard Valley, and it is at once intelligent, witty, thought-provoking, sometimes outrageous, never disinterested, and, in the face of occasional grumblings from the Tired Traditionalists of Horror Fandom, courageous. A strong personality inevitably produces a strong reaction, and *Scarlet Street* has certainly done that in its near decade of existence. I can think of no rival magazine currently available with as sharp and lively an editorial content (and as sharp and lively an editor) as *SS*: not

Scary Monsters, not *Monsters From the Vault*, not the Forry-less *Famous Monsters* or the Beckless *Castle* or any other bland Brand X. While *Scarlet Street* valiantly encourages us to think about our old favorites in new and exciting ways, its competitors cry out against revisionism and in doing so cry out against new ideas. They're the William Jennings Bryans of genre publications, and *Scarlet Street* is Clarence Darrow. Continued success!

Ellen Santangelo
Lincoln, NE

Tom Amorosi replies: Mr. Valley has been making Xerox copies of your letter for the past two hours, so it falls to me to respond. The magazines you mention have some good things to offer, Ellen—but we certainly don't mind your having a favorite!

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the NEWS



HOUND

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Theatrical Thrills

Scheduled for theaters this September: Kevin Bacon hears *A STIR OF ECHOES* (Artisan Entertainment) in the seriously eerie ghost tale based on the Richard Matheson story . . . Tommy Lee Jones and Ashley Judd play a suspenseful game of *DOUBLE JEOPARDY* (Paramount), courtesy of screenwriter Robert Benton (*TWILIGHT*) and director Bruce Beresford (*PARADISE ROAD*) . . . and paraplegic police detective Denzel Washington hunts a serial killer called *THE BONE COLLECTOR* (Universal) with the help of able assistant Angelina (*PLAYING BY HEART*) Jolie. Also getting a (delayed) September release is the MGM supernatural shocker *STIGMATA*, starring Gabriel Byrne as a cleric and Patricia Arquette as a stigmatic. (Contact lenses can't correct for that condition, unfortunately.)

This Halloween, ring the doorbell of *THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL*, the Dark Castle/Warner Bros. William Castle remake that opens on October 29. Geoffrey Rush and Jeff Combs will hand out the tricks and Liz Hurley and Famke Janssen will bestow the treats. Other releases scheduled for October include *LOST SOULS* (New Line Cinema), the demonic drama starring Winona Ryder; *SCREAM IF YOU KNOW WHAT I DID LAST HALLOWEEN* (Dimension), the spook spoof from the Wayans brothers; the 25th anniversary rerelease of Tobe Hooper's *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*; and the 30th anniversary (give or take) reissue of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* in a special edition that raises the zombie count.

The Headless Horseman gallops headlong through *SLEEPY HOLLOW* (Paramount) this November, chasing after Ichabod Crane (portrayed by Johnny "Ed Wood" Depp) under Tim Burton's direction. Also in November, Arnold Schwarzenegger tries to terminate Satan's plans in *END OF DAYS* (Universal), and that insatiable superspy James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) finds *THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH* (United Artists), even though it includes Denise Richards, Sophie Marceau, Robert Carlisle, and John Cleese. What more does this Bond guy want, for crying out loud?

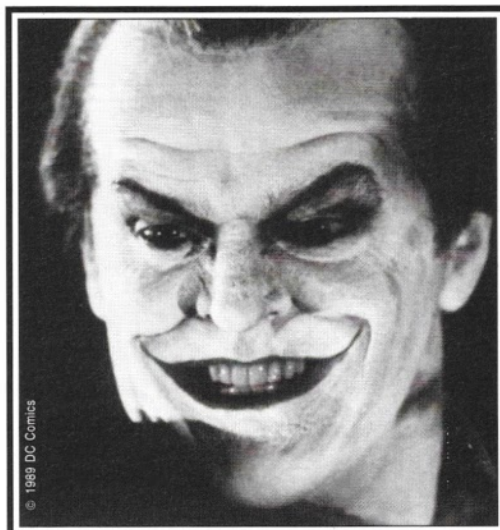
More Movie Mayhem

A flurry of sequels are scheduled to descend in December: *SCREAM 3* (Dimension), with returnees Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox, and David Arquette do-

ing the yelling; *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 2* (Paramount), starring erstwhile necrophiliac Tom Cruise; and Disney's *FANTASIA 2000*, vastly on view at regional Imax theaters. Also due for a December debut are two literary adaptations: Stephen King's *THE GREEN MILE* (Warner Bros.), starring Tom Hanks and Gary Sinise, and Isaac Asimov's *BICENTENNIAL MAN* (Disney), starring Robin Williams and Sam Neill.

Roman Polanski's supernatural horror tale *THE NINTH GATE* (Artisan) has been rescheduled for December (a favorite month for horror ever since the original *SCREAM* in 1996). Johnny Depp stars as a book dealer embroiled in a plot to collect rare, evil books for a rare, evil purpose.

Coming in early 2000: Director Walter Hill's outer space thriller *SUPERNOVA* (MGM), starring James Spader and Angela Bassett, bursts into theaters in Janu-



Will the Clown Prince of Crime return in the next Batman movie or is it all just a cruel joke?

ary, and the horror sequels *THE CROW: SALVATION* (Miramax) and *FREDDY VS. JASON* (New Line) are planned for a spring fling.

Tentatively scheduled for next summer: *THE HOLLOW MAN* (Columbia), an invisible-man thriller from *STARSHIP TROOPERS* director Paul Verhoeven; the big-screen version of that jigglicious seventies show *CHARLIE'S ANGELS* (Columbia), starring Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, and possibly Catherine Zeta Jones; and the long-awaited feature debut of those Marvel Comics mutants, *The X-MEN*, from Fox. So far, the casting of the mighty mutants goes like this:

Dougray Scott (*EVER AFTER*) as Wolverine, Anna Pacquin (*THE PIANO*) as Rogue, pro wrestler Tyler Mane as badass mutant Sabretooth, Patrick Stewart as Professor Xavier, and Sir Ian McKellen as the villainous Magneto. Brian Singer (who directed McKellen in *APT PUPIL*) starts shooting the flick in August. No shower scenes are scheduled.

Future Features

"There can be only one!" Well, maybe one more. The indestructible Scotsman Connor MacLeod again rears his head (which is still attached, luckily) in the new Miramax feature *HIGHLANDER: WORLD WITHOUT END*. Christopher Lambert returns as the oddly Gallic-accented Scot, bringing with him Adrian Paul as Connor's kilted clansman Duncan, the character Paul portrayed for six years on the popular *HIGHLANDER* TV series. This fourth feature in the *HIGHLANDER* film saga begins shooting in October in multiple locations in Europe and North America.

The *HAUNTING* Catherine Zeta Jones has been signed to star as a futuristic hit-woman in *THE TENTH VICTIM*. It's a remake of Italian director Elio Petri's 1965 romantic sci-fi action comedy (never mind, just go with it) about a society where supervised assassinations are a perfectly legal method of reducing violence. Zeta Jones fills the stilettoes and holster of Ursula Andress, the star of the original version.

The cult-fave circus thriller subgenre (see *Scarlet Street* #6 for a great retrospective) gets a new look as John Hannah (*THE MUMMY*) and Famke Janssen (*GOLDENEYE*) star as a treacherous pair of scam artists in *CIRCUS*, which costars Amanda Donahoe (*L.A. LAW*). Rob Walker, director on Ian McShane's UK mystery series *MADSON*, makes his feature directing debut on the project.

Canadian director Bob Clark, whose wildly eclectic output has included *MURDER BY DECREE*, *PORKY'S*, *A CHRISTMAS STORY*, and the cautionary *CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS*, is said to be turning next to Grimm's *Fairy Tales* for a live-action version of *TOM THUMB*.

A Good Monster is Worth Repeating

Universal's boffo box-office receipts from this May's action comedy remake of *THE MUMMY* has got them digging up more of their old mon-stars and giving them the comic treatment. The company's computer-animated *Frankenstein* feature is still in production despite rumors to the

Continued on page 15

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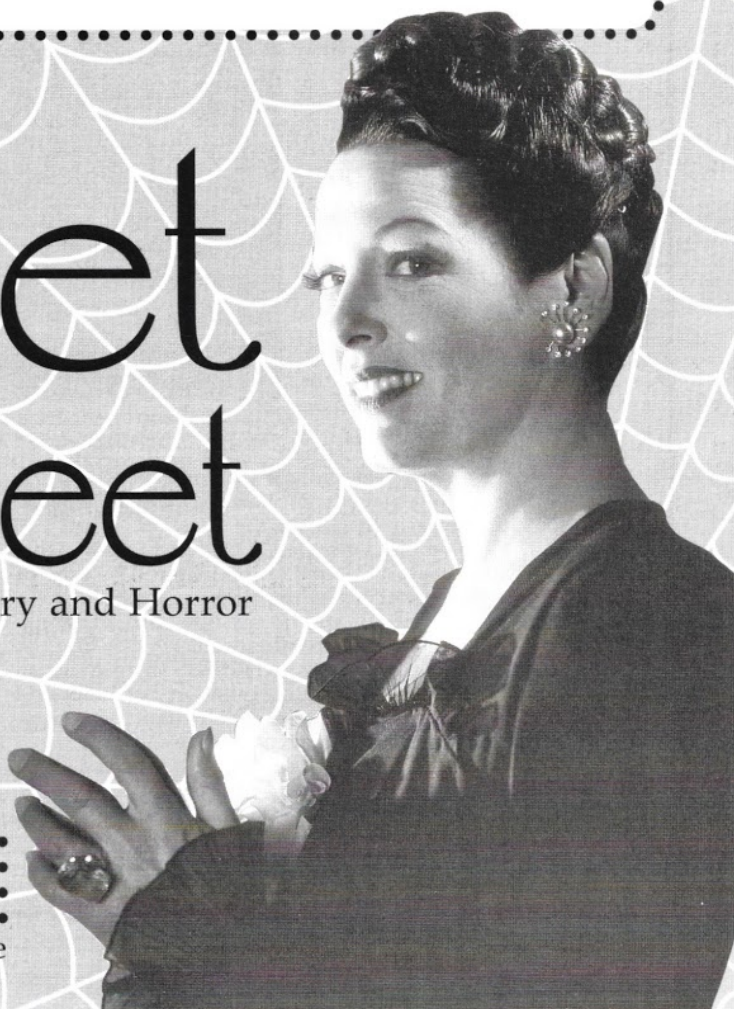
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TWILIGHT TIME

THE ZONE ON DVD

by Michael Draine

Rarely have the doubts and fears of the Cold War era been more imaginatively expressed than in *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*'s 1959-64 run. Author of 92 of the series' 156 teleplays, Rod Serling parlayed the alienation and loneliness of contemporary American life into provocative, philosophical drama. *ZONE*'s recurring motif of alternate realities posed an implicit challenge to the status quo of a rigorously conformist age, while holding the promise of expanded consciousness.

Having licensed the series from CBS and Fox (who jointly own the rights), Panasonic has plunged into a rapid release program. Disregarding the original broadcast sequence, Panasonic has combined the contents of CBS Video's two-episode cassettes into four shows per disc. The sequence within individual volumes is often shuffled to break up the VHS double features, and the selections display little stylistic cohesion. Overall, the programming seems to reflect a policy of withholding the best of the series for subsequent releases.

Volume One hosts senior citizen night in *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*, with Art Carney as a Skid Row Santa in the shot-on-video "Night of the Meek" (12/23/60), Agnes Moorehead as a rustic hag defending herself against tiny astronauts in Richard Matheson's "The Invaders," (1/27/61), and Gladys Cooper fending off Death in George Clayton Johnson's "Nothing in the Dark" (1/5/62). The cumulative effect is a pessimistic vision of old age, which Serling, who died of a heart attack at 51, never faced.

Serling's embittered idealism finds its most trenchant expression in his adaptation of Richard Matheson's "Third From the Sun" (1/8/60). Contemplating an imminent nuclear holocaust, Fritz Weaver speaks for the author: "People are afraid because they make themselves afraid. They're afraid because they subvert every great thing ever discovered, every fine idea ever thought, every marvelous invention ever conceived. They subvert it... they make it crooked and devious, and too late, far too late, they ask themselves the question, 'Why?'"

Volume Five's "Long Distance Call" (3/3/61) presents a disturbing portrait of maternal domination inspired by screenwriter Charles Beaumont's own upbringing. Artful camera movement and closeups imbue the episode with an immediacy that overcomes its cheap, videocam look. While the budgetary concession to shoot six second-season episodes on videotape rescued the series from cancellation, Serling found the results so aesthetically offensive that he demanded a return to film production under threat of resignation.

Panasonic's strongest collection yet, Volume Eleven gathers four tales of inanimate objects come to life: "The Fever" (1/29/60), directed by Robert Florey (*MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE*/1932); "The After Hours" (6/10/60), with Anne Francis as a wayward mannequin; "The Dummy" (5/24/62), starring Cliff Robertson as a schizoid ventriloquist; and "Liv-

ing Doll" (1/1/63), with Telly Savalas. "Living Doll" includes an original broadcast artifact unmentioned on the packaging: a teaser for the following week's show, "The Old Man in the Cave."

"The After Hours" opens with a haunting main title sequence in which a woman's eye (suggestive of the Man Ray photograph "Glass Tears") dissolves into a sunset. As this variant title was used for only four episodes, it's tempting to speculate that Serling was temporarily pressured to adopt CBS' eye trademark as a design element.

In an unlikely turn for 1960 television, James Milhollin essays his role of department store manager in "The After Hours" as a bitchy gay stereotype. According to Serling biographer Joel Engel, Serling's personal conversation and correspondence was peppered with homophobic epithets.

Volumes Four, Five, Six, Eight, Nine, and Ten each bury certified duds between classic episodes. "Mr. Dingle, the Strong" (3/3/61), the backwoods tall tale "The Last Rites of Jeff Myrtlebank" (2/23/62), the Shelley Berman vehicle "The Mind and the Matter" (5/12/61), and "Once Upon a Time" (12/15/61) with Buster Keaton, collectively testify to the *ZONE*'s ineptitude at comedy. The most interesting thing about the final-season

sci-fi clinker "Probe 7—Over and Out" (11/29/63) is the Pall Mall package on the end credits.

While most footage is in excellent condition, the bracing clarity of DVD makes even a single-frame fleck apparent. Visible damage includes scratches in "A Game of Pool" (10/13/61), a burn hole in "Deaths-Head Revisited" (11/10/61), some reel-end wear in "To Serve Man," and an odd flicker during Serling's introduction to "Mr. Dingle, the Strong" (3/3/61).

Twenty-five of the 43 episodes presented here have been released on laserdisc. Though apparently derived from the same transfers as the lasers, the DVDs offer a sharper, better-defined image. However, low bit rate encoding prevents this presentation from achieving the filmlike dimensionality and texture encountered on the best DVDs. Panasonic's DVDs betray some compression artifacts: after-images of Gig Young as he spins on a malt-shop stool in "Walking Distance" (10/30/59), strobing during the 360° card-table pan in "Third From the Sun," and jagged diagonals and shimmering backgrounds in Dennis Weaver's death-row cell in "Shadow Play" (5/5/61).

The high resolution underscores cinematographer George T. Clemens' contribution to the metaphysical air of the series. Deftly transversing the realms of the mundane and the fantastic, Clemens availed himself equally of conventional three-point lighting, Expressionistic perspectives, and *noir*-ish chiaroscuro to invoke the incursion of the uncanny into the everyday.

Most episodes have been shorn of the animated intertitle that provided a mood-sustaining interlude between acts. The few that retain the break reveal how critical this interval is to the show's dreamlike rhythm. Each episode is allotted three chapter stops, which don't correspond to original commercial breaks.

Extras are limited to an interactive trivia game and an unillustrated text supplement written by Marc Scott Zicree, author of *The Twilight Zone Companion* (Bantam Books, 1982).

Continued on page 74



Gladys Cooper confronts death in the classic *TWILIGHT ZONE* episode "Nothing in the Dark."

Dear Diary

THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER
Image Entertainment
DVD, \$24.98

One of the greatest unsolved murder sprees in history is the one undertaken by Jack the Ripper in 1888. The number of rumors and theories regarding his true identity are matched only by those surrounding the assassination of JFK. In 1991, however, a new twist in the story of these grisly murders emerged when a diary attributed to the Ripper came to public attention. These startling developments are examined in the Image DVD release of **THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER: BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT?**

This documentary both disappoints and fascinates. It is obvious from the simple and crude opening title graphic that this is a low-budget affair, which is odd given its release on DVD, a format that displays to great advantage superior sound and picture quality but also painfully reveals the limitations of inferior or inexpensive productions. An example of the DIARY's schizophrenic quality: the black-and-white video segments reenacting the Ripper's killings appear to be shot quickly on video and lack any drama or suspense to enhance

the narrative. In contrast, the use of actual photographs of the crime scenes, some of which I'd never seen before, were tellingly effective. Another symptom of the miniscule budget Michael Winner (Britain's TRUE CRIME INVESTIGATIONS producer) and crew had to work with is obvious in the audio quality. Often a low end humming or sibilance is present with certain on-camera experts, making it difficult to understand them. It was necessary to turn the treble setting up considerably to regain audio clarity.

Despite these disappointments, the information contained within the documentary is fascinating and presented in an accessible manner. We're immediately plunged into the discovery of the diary and the efforts to determine its authenticity. Numerous experts check in with their opinions of the supposed evidence implicating London cotton merchant James Maybrick as Saucy Jack. I knew little about Maybrick prior to this documentary, but the piece by piece manner in which the diary is compared to both commonly held knowledge and recently unsealed evidence in the Ripper case makes



JACK THE RIPPER was dramatized in a 1988 telefilm starring Lewis Collins and Michael Caine, but **THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER** puts a fresh and bizarre spin on things.

for compelling and informative drama. Narrator Tom Baker's smooth and enticing voice lends itself well to the suspense and intrigue one expects for such subject matter.

THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER runs 79 minutes and is presented full screen without any extras. One word of caution regarding the content: although the program is not rated, some of the stills of the actual crime scenes are quite graphic in nature and the narrative pulls no punches in detailing the physical atrocities endured by the victims.

—Michael D. Walker

NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 12

contrary—though it remains to be seen if the storyline has been changed from creepy to kooky. **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN** is purportedly being wedded to producer Ivan Reitman (**GHOSTBUSTERS**, **PRIVATE PARTS**) for a risible resurrection, and Stephen Sommers, director and coscripter of this year's model of **MUMMY**, is said to have been tapped by Universal to create a high-camp remake of **THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON**. Glub, glub . . .

Scary Scuttlebutt

Rough goings on the Red Planet are in store for Val Kilmer, Carrie-Anne Moss, and Tom Sizemore in Warner Bros.' sci-fi thriller **MARS**. (CIRCUS? MARS? Whatever happened to adjectives?) As directed by newcomer Antony Hoffmann and scripted by Chuck (VIRUS) Pfarrer and Jonathan (THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE) Lemkin, **MARS** concerns the first manned mission to the title orb, and the marooning of members of the crew on the surface. Moss, who cut an impressive figure earlier this year as "Trinity" in Warner's **THE MATRIX**, must decide whether to follow strict orders or to rescue her stranded crewmates. Rival Martian madness is due from Disney with director Brian DePalma's **MISSION TO MARS**, starring Tim Robbins, Gary Sinise, and Don Cheadle. It also concerns an attempt

to rescue the crew of the first manned Martian mission. The two battling Mars movies are racing each other toward a late spring/early summer splashdown.

Paramount will go where they've gone before and produce a 10th **STAR TREK** feature film, tentatively planned for release in 2001. The curse of the odd-numbered **TREK** films struck hard at last year's **STAR TREK INSURRECTION**, which many fans considered the worst **TREK** feature in a decade. Paramount head of production Sherry Lansing has been quoted as saying that the studio will "reinvent" the franchise into something "new and original . . . possibly with new cast members." Yipe! Maybe some members of the **DEEP SPACE NINE** crew will be folded into the mix, or perhaps we'll get a **TREK** version of Jar Jar Binks. Meesa wanna beam up!

Novel Ideas

Drowning Ruth, Christina Schwarz's soon-to-be-published mystery novel set in thirties Wisconsin, is being sought by Miramax as a future project for **ELM STREET** director Wes Craven.

The prolific fantasy author Vonda N. McIntyre has had her science fiction novel *The Moon and the Sun* purchased by Jim Henson Pictures for future filming. The story is set in 17th-century France, where a young woman fights to protect the life of a sea monster her brother has captured on an ocean voyage. King Louis

XVI believes the monster holds the key to eternal life, and wants to kill the creature to obtain it. McIntyre will coauthor the screenplay, to be directed by Christopher Renshaw, a theater director who's staged operas and musicals worldwide.

Updates Aplenty

Director Robert Zemeckis starts production in August on DreamWorks' ghostly drama **WHAT LIES BENEATH**. The story, cowritten by Steven Spielberg, concerns a New England college professor whose wife becomes haunted by the specter of a murdered coed. Power pair Harrison Ford and Michelle Pfeiffer portray the spooked spouses. Watch for it next May.

The latest rumor about **BATMAN 5** involves a newly submitted script that pits the Caped Crusader against a resurrected Joker for a major Millennial Batbattle. (Is that Our Beloved Reditor I hear screaming from his office, "That's exactly what I told Schumacher to do!") Getting Jack Nicholson to reprise his role as the Clown Prince of Crime might give this sinking series a much-needed kick in the cape. But there's still no official Bat-signal from Warner Bros. concerning casting, plot, or production date.

Indiana Jones will return, but don't start dialing 777-FILM quite yet. In a published interview, Lucasfilm producer Rick McCallum confirms that a completed script by Jeffrey Boam (writer of the pre-



If the Mummy can walk again (and he can, he can), will it be long before the Creature swims among us? The surprise success of Universal's THE MUMMY has the studio dusting off their tried-and-true monsters, with Blackie Lagoon leading in the Great Remake Race.

vious Indy adventure, *LAST CRUSADE*) has gotten rave reviews from George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. The plot concerns either Atlantis or Excalibur, depending on which rumor you believe. But attempts to synchronize the schedules of Spielberg, Lucas, and Harrison Ford will delay the production by anywhere from two to five years. By that time, they'll probably be promoting the 25th anniversary holographic brain-chip video release of *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*.

Television Thrills

This fall, the WB Network attempts to duplicate their *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* success with *ROSWELL*, a new hour-long drama that mixes teens and sci-fi the way *BUFFY* brought horror to high school. *ROSWELL*, reportedly based on the Roswell High series of young-adult novels by Melinda Metz, concerns the efforts of a group of young folks in the title New Mexican town to shield an alien (disguised as the very human Jason Behr of *DAWSON'S CREEK*) from capture and possible dissection by the government. The youthful ensemble cast includes Colin Hanks (Tom's kid) and veteran heavy William Sadler as the token adult.

Hey, Spenser's for hire once again. *SMALL VICES*, the new Arts & Entertainment feature that premiered in July, is the first of five telefilms by A&E based on the Robert B. Parker Spenser novels. The versatile actor Joe Mantegna, an avowed fan of the Parker books, portrays the Boston-based private eye. Following in Spenser's A&E footsteps: *Nero Wolfe*, featuring Tim Hutton (whose dad, Jim, was once TV's Ellery Queen) as Wolfe's right-hand man, Archie Goodwin.

The Y2K bug has hit *MILLENNIUM*, producer Chris Carter's terminally grim but frequently fascinating Fox TV series. Feeling no doubt an ironic pang, Carter has had his show cancelled before it could reach its 1999-2000 season. However, the

FX cable channel has acquired *MILLENNIUM*'s two completed seasons and began rerun telecasts on Monday, July 19th.

The Fox network premieres a series of TV movies this fall with the umbrella title *KISS, KISS, BANG, BANG*. (Sound familiar, Eon Productions?) The telefilms are remakes of classic (and not so classic) 20th Century Fox films noir. First up is *KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE* (based on the 1950 gangster thriller) starring X-FILES' favorite ratboy Nicholas Lea in the role originally played by James Cagney. Costarring with Lea is 90210's Jason Priestley, who also directs the flick.

Some familiar faces from *STAR TREK* will appear in featured roles in fantasy productions scheduled for the 1999-2000 TV season. Versatile Irish actor Colm Meany (Chief O'Brien of *NEXT GENERATION* and *DEEP SPACE NINE*) plays the leader of the Little People in NBC's *LEPRECHAUNS*. The Hallmark Entertainment miniseries also features former Ten Forward hostess Whoopi Goldberg, who portrayed the Cheshire Cat in Hallmark's recent *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*. And ABC's Sunday night series *THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DISNEY* has cast Broadway veterans Brent "Data" Spiner and Rene "Odo" Auberjonois in an original musical telefeature entitled *GEPPETTO*, which stars comic Drew Carey as Pinocchio's pop.

The pay-cable outfit Showtime attempts to give Sci-Fi Channel some competition this September when it launches *Showtime Beyond*, which will program theatrical features and original series produced especially for the channel. *Showtime Beyond* will be available on selected cable systems that offer digital service.

The Home Video Vault

The DVD release of *TITANIC* (Paramount) docks at your local home video port this August in a Dolby Digital 5.1

edition for \$29.99. Additionally, a new deluxe VHS boxed set will be available at a sell-through price in October, which features a 24-page souvenir photo album.

The intriguing psychic thriller *IN DREAMS*, starring Annette Bening, appears on laserdisc in August at \$29.99, as does the double feature of sixties sci-fi faves *THE LAST MAN ON EARTH* and *PANIC IN THE YEAR ZERO* (\$39.99, letterboxed). Both are available from Image Entertainment.

New DVD releases in August include John Carpenter's *CHRISTINE* (Columbia/TriStar, \$24.98), *HALLOWEEN 4* (Anchor Bay, \$29.99), Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN* (Columbia, \$29.98), the 1960 Italian cheapie *THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE* (Image, \$19.99), and Anchor Bay limited editions of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* and John Carpenter's *HALLOWEEN*, both with lots of supplemental material (\$34.98 and \$44.98 respectively).

Fritz Lang's 1919 adventure *THE SPIDERS*, a sci-fi tinged crime drama about a band of gangsters bent on world domination, gets a triumphant DVD release this August from Image (\$29.99). The two-hour-plus silent film was previously thought to be lost, but has been reconstructed and color tinted from Lang's own notes.

Universal Home Video takes the wraps off their release of this year's horror hit *THE MUMMY* in September. Letterboxed and full-screen VHS editions are \$22.98, and a special DVD edition, available for \$29.98, includes deleted scenes, a 40-minute behind-the-scenes documentary, and more. Also on view in September, Christopher Lloyd enlivens the effects-filled but otherwise earthbound *MY FAVORITE MARTIAN* (Disney; \$22.99 VHS, \$39.99 laser, \$29.99 DVD). Other DVD releases in September include *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN 2* and *PROPHECY 2* (both from Disney at \$29.99), and Jack Hill's 1964 epic of rural cannibalism, *SPIDER BABY* (Image, \$19.99).

This spring's cyber-hit (and Keanu Comeback) *THE MATRIX* (Warner Home Video; priced for rental) weaves into video stores in October, as does the horror sequel *THE RAGE: CARRIE 2* (MGM/UA; VHS rental, laser \$29.99).

Gone, but never to be forgotten: film historian and author George Turner, director Edward Dmytryk, film critic Stewart Klein, novelist Roderick Thorp, Hollywood poster artist Enrico Mangravite, singer/actor Mel Torme, producers Buck Houghton (*TWILIGHT ZONE*) and Gerry Fernbach, and actors Hillary Brooke, Vanessa Brown, Horst Frank, Sylvia Sidney, Henry Jones, Doreen Lang, Charles Pierce, Norman Rossington, Zoe Tamerlis, and *STAR TREK*'s beloved Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy, DeForest Kelley.

Send The Hound your questions, comments and compliments via e-mail to TheNewsHound@yahoo.com.



Crimson Chronicles

by Forrest J Ackerman



I am writing these words at four in the morning, an hour before I'm to be picked up by shuttle for the LAX airport and flown off to the Monster Bash starring Sara Karloff in Pittsburgh, then to New York for the Sotheby's auction of the sci-fi treasures of the late superfan Sam Moskowitz (fanzines from the thirties, artwork by the great ones—Paul, Finlay, Bok), then to Minneapolis where I'm to be Toastmaster at the first CONvergence. Then there's the 25th Anniversary ComicCon coming up (I was their first Guest of Honor) and Monster Rally (Ingrid Pitt! Christopher Lee! the Ackermmonster! et al) and at year's end I'm being flown First Class over to Europe, to Frankfurt/Germany, the birthplace of my late wife Wendayne "Rocket to the Rue Morgue" Ackerman, to be Guest of Honor (with a right honorable stipend!) at the 2,000th Issue Anniversary of Perry Rhodan, the weekly adventurer thru space & time, familiar in the seventies thru 137 magabooks (bookazines) with my wife translator-in-chief and myself as editor. So this is not exactly Crimson Chronicles this time, but Golden ones . . .

As a twice winner of Golden Saturn Awards, I was feted June 9 at a posh Beverly Hills \$500-a-plate banquet (no

food, you understand, just \$500 a plate) at the 25th Anniversary of the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror, of which I was a charter member way back when it was the original Count Dracula Society and before it morphed into the prestigious Academy. I dined with Ray Bradbury and Rod Steiger (who individually scripted and starred in THE ILLUS-TRATED MAN) and during the course of



Horror fan Gene Simmons (and the rest of KISS) appear in the summer teen comedy DETROIT ROCK CITY.

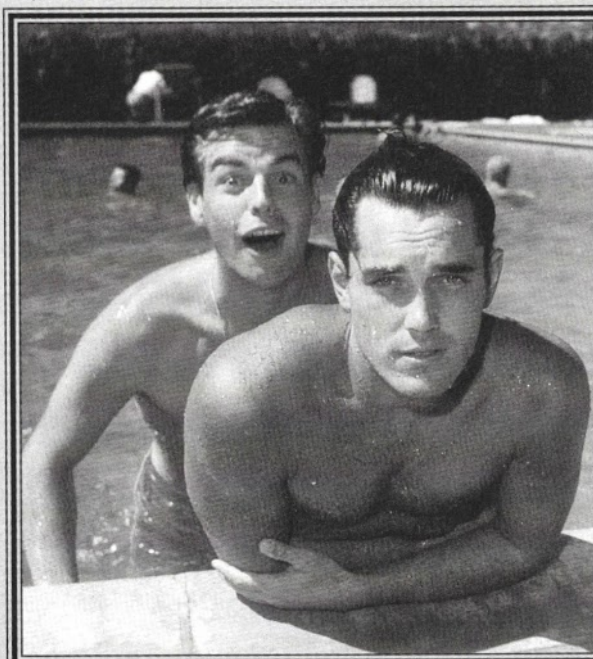
the evening I presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to 91-year-old imagi-movie director Nathan Juran (of Harryhausen Sinbad fame). Gene "Kiss" Simmons was fulsome in his praise of me as the inspirator of his career with the issues in his youth of James Warren's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* that I edited. The gala event was populated by Michael York (remake of NOT OF THIS EARTH), William (EXORCIST) Friedkin, actress/singer/sci-fi fan Janet Carroll, imagi-movie magazine publisher Jeffrey Roberts (*It's Alive!*), and Dr. Donald Reed (Founder of the society). To cap the climax, I was bussed by Linda Blair! Oh, yes, incidentally I gave six television interviews. A night to remember, as I reminisced for the audience about past highlights of meetings with Vincent Price, Fritz Lang, Karl Freund, Elsa Lanchester, Rock Hudson, John Carradine, Yvette Mimieux, George Pal (Bradbury received the Pal Award at this Anniversary dinner), Terri Pinckard, Richard Matheson, Bela Lugosi Jr., Sara Karloff, Helen Gahagan (SHE), James Warren, James Karen, Gene Roddenberry, Rod Serling, and scores of other celebrities.

See you next issue . . .



WHOOOPS!

Getting a little behind in your *Scarlet Street* collection? If the answer's yes, then don't delay—our early-issue supply of the *Magazine of Mystery and Horror* (and so much more!) is sinking fast! There's still time for you to float a complete set, though, so paddle on over to pages six and seven (or to page 11 for those low-budget monsters in search of a bargain) and place your order now! What better way to make a big splash with your friends?



SCREEN...



and Screen AGAIN!



Scarlet Street's DVD and Laser Review

**THE DEVIL RIDES OUT
THE WITCHES**
Elite Entertainment
Two Sides (each disc) CLV
Laserdisc, \$39.95 each

In the mid-sixties, Hammer Films produced two supernatural dramas which I've dubbed "The Satanic Duo," *THE WITCHES* (1966) and *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT* (1968). With varying effectiveness, the two portray English communities threatened by internal disillusionment with traditional paths. Despite the superficial trappings of good schools and Rolls Royces, the films imply that evil can exist anywhere. Elite Entertainment has released concurrent laserdisc presentations of both.

THE WITCHES (aka *THE DEVIL'S OWN*) was intended as a comeback vehicle for Joan Fontaine. The actress optioned the rights to Peter Curtis' 1960 book *The Devil's Own*, with Nigel Kneale adapting it for Hammer. The cinematic version met with modest success as a veddy British mystery, but fell short of the studio's horror standard.

Teacher Gwen Mayfield (Joan Fontaine) flees an African missionary school after being served an unpalatable brew of tribal unrest laced with voodoo. After recuperating in England, she is hired by Alan Bax (Alec McCowen) to join the faculty of Heddaby School. The school is operated by Bax and his sister Stephanie (Kay Walsh), a newspaper columnist of some note. Soon enough, Gwen discovers that her English cup of tea isn't the chaser she hoped to find.

Although the town church is a crumbling ruin, the local society is steeped in religion—witchcraft, unfortunately. A blossoming teenage romance (Martin Stephens and Ingrid Brett) is supernaturally nipped in the bud, to preserve the girl's purity for her intended ritual sacrifice. Gwen ultimately vanquishes the vil-

lage witch and restores the community to a state of normalcy.

THE WITCHES only approaches horror in its climactic scene. The pagan ceremony is one of orgiastic dancing (although the dancing itself wouldn't have been banned from any contemporary discotheque). The sequence's most disturbing ingredient is its accompanying music, which is performed by some of the cultists themselves. The cacophony produced by horns, drums, and bones embodies the festivities with a suitably primitive ambience. But for devotees of the macabre, this represents too little, too late. The film has its twists and turns, but a trampling herd of rogue sheep is hardly the stuff of nightmares.

Certainly, the cast is formidable enough. Aside from Fontaine, the supporting players include acclaimed stage actor McCowen, marvelous character actress Walsh, Stephens (remembered for 1960's *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* and 1961's *THE INNOCENTS*), and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, who would portray another supernaturalist in *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT*. They all give efficient performances. Walsh all but steals the show from Fontaine, as the opinionated columnist who is rather too much of an authority on witchcraft lore. It's a meaty character, a scholar who has forcefully manipulated the heathen faith to achieve her own intellectual extreme. Walsh is always plausible, even when pronouncing the ritual incantation. She transcends the production to emerge as a memorable Hammer villainess. Fontaine is believable as the harried schoolteacher, but her performance suffers from an overabundance of posed close-ups. In fact, there's such a parade of her drawn-out reaction shots that the film suggests a vanity project. The use of process photography for some closeups only increases the sense of artificiality.

THE WITCHES' "surprise ending" has always been one of the worst-kept secrets at Elstree. That literal British release title didn't leave a lot of room for guesswork. Although the novel's less explicit title was restored for American play dates, *Screen Stories* magazine published a complete description of the plot, accompanied by a photo of Kay Walsh garbed in sorceress regalia. A couple of the original lobby cards also revealed her to be the witch. Elite has succumbed to this "curse" by placing an image of Walsh presiding over the occult ceremony on their jacket cover. Pity, that.

Other than the expository cover and the unexplained inclusion of a still from *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT* on the back cover, Elite's laserdisc is satisfactory. The film's color scheme, emphasizing earthy tones of brown and green, is pleasingly reproduced, with only a couple of scenes looking less robust. There are no discernible visual artifacts or stray markings. The matting, at 1:66-1, displays more of the village and its sacrificial cave than did older television prints. A selection of trailer previews rounds out the disc. One black-and-white combo TV spot for the US package of *PREHISTORIC WOMEN/ THE DEVIL'S OWN* trumpets that the films are in color—another potential surprise ruined by explicit marketing.

Of greater interest is *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT* (aka *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE*), widely regarded as one of Hammer's finest. It's a marvelous concoction of believably flawed heroes and seductive villains, set in a flavorful twenties milieu. The film is a potent interpretation of Dennis Wheatley's 1935 novel about satanic encroachment into the English upper class.

The Duc de Richleau (Christopher Lee) and Rex Van Ryn's (Leon Greene) reunion is dampened when the old chums discover that their younger friend, Simon Aron (Patrick Mower), is flirting with Mocata's (Charles Gray) coven of devil worshippers. Van Ryn himself becomes infatuated with Tanith (Nike Arrighi), an-



other cult inductee. The assorted advocates of good and evil become embroiled in a deadly struggle for the souls of Aron and Tanith. Among other perils, de Richleau must battle the Goat of Mendes and the Angel of Death itself.

Under director Terence Fisher's sure hand, the special effects (such as they are) never dwarf the characters. Christopher Lee shines in a rare heroic role, always mindful of the great danger he and his friends must confront. Whereas the Mocata of the book was an obese vulgarian, Charles Gray personifies him with a demonic suavity reminiscent of a Hitchcock villain. The supporting cast perform to the same high level, bringing credibility to the plot's fantastic elements. Leon Greene has been dubbed, so his performance is harder to judge. (His booming, operatic voice may be sampled in the studio's 1968 release *A CHALLENGE FOR ROBIN HOOD*.) He does provide the necessary brawn to complement de Richleau's brain power.

Unfortunately, the special effects are a mixed bag. Betraying the medium budget, they are beguiling but seldom terrifying. In particular, the car chase sequence is ruined by obvious process photography. It is the caliber of the acting, coupled with Richard Matheson's deft screenplay, that allows for the suspension of disbelief. One of the scariest scenes is achieved without any trickery. Mocata maneuvers to hypnotize de Richleau's niece, Marie (Sarah Lawson), while simultaneously diverting his intellectual forces to corrupt Aron and Tanith, who have been sequestered upstairs. He nearly succeeds but for the intrusion of Marie's daughter, Peggy (Rosalyn Landor). The ensuing Pentacle scene, in which de Richleau and his companions repel an array of Mocata's mental and physical assaults, derives tangible suspense from the cast's earnestness. An additional detail, the unexpected apparition of young Peggy, injects an emotional ingredient into the horror, which only intensifies the encircled protagonists' spiritual torment.

The Elite laserdisc is a superb showcase for *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT*. The colors are rich and consistently realized, with nary a visual blemish. The 1:66-1 letterboxing exhibits the handsome sets properly, especially Simon Aron's observatory. The film simply hasn't looked this good since its theatrical release. The disc ends with a British trailer, followed by its more explicit American counterpart.

Christopher Lee, Sarah Lawson, and Hammer expert Marcus Hearn wax nostalgic during a full-running audio commentary track. Lee assumes center stage and discusses various aspects of the production. His talk is largely one of character analysis, in which he describes the motivations that inform the drama. He occasionally adds behind-the-scenes information, such as naming his longtime stuntman Eddie Powell as the man who portrayed the Goat of Mendes. Often, though, he settles for reciting on-screen

events rather than exploring their creation.

Lee demonstrates an authoritative knowledge of witchcraft and other religions, and helpfully contrasts Wheatley's book with Fisher's filmization of it. He is entertaining, even with sporadic bursts of redundancy. The other two participants also manage to get a word in edgewise. Sometimes, all three begin speaking at once. Confusing as that may be, their mutual enthusiasm for the film is certainly contagious.

—John F. Black

THE ILLUSTRATED MAN
Warner Home Video
Two Sides CLV
Laserdisc, \$34.98

One of my fondest memories is when I first read Ray Bradbury's famous short-story collection *The Illustrated Man* (1951). It told of a young hitchhiker encountering a drifter whose body was covered in skin illustrations. If one looked too closely, it wasn't long before an illustration would come to life and reveal a story of the future.

Director Jack Smight sets the story for the 1969 film version firmly in Bradbury's familiar Midwest, opening with the young hitchhiker, Will (Robert Drivas), taking a nude dip in a small lake, and just as quickly unveils an undercurrent of sexual tension that was never present in the book by introducing the other drifter, Carl (Rod Steiger), also entering the lake nude. What might be considered a nostalgic take on skinny dipping merits further thought as the story progresses.

Following this ambiguous beginning, Carl enters Will's campsite with the demeanor of one who is used to taking what he wants, immediately going through Will's possessions, invading the personal space one expects a stranger to respect.

Drivas plays Will in a curiously fey manner. For someone traveling alone, he is remarkably unprotective of himself. It isn't long before Will learns Carl's frightening secret, that he has been covered from neck to toe in skin illustrations by a mysterious woman named Felicia (hauntingly played by Claire Bloom). Just as in the book, when gazed upon these illustrations come alive and play out a future scenario of horror.

What is surprising is Will's lack of fear when confronted with this remarkable man. Steiger is an imposing Carl, almost exactly as described by Bradbury. Carl's thick hands, long arms, and massive body carry the burden of many stories. His eyes are nearly black as he sizes up the smaller, younger man. Anyone with common sense would be apprehensive, but Will seems unusually attracted to Carl even before glimpsing his first illustration.

The late Robert Drivas was gay in real life, but this hardly explains *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN*'s homoerotic beginning. A



© 1969 Warner Bros.-Seven Arts, Inc.

skilled actor who holds his own against Steiger's powerful performance, Drivas could easily have played it straight. Instead, his gentle mannerisms and telling eye movements build the dynamics of the sexual menace and allure between these two characters. Whether it's in Howard B. Kreitsek's script or Jack Smight's direction, it is obvious that Will is as attracted to Carl as he is to the dangerous mystery of the illustrations.

Also atypical of an anthology film is the fact that this framing story is far more fascinating than the three "skin illustration" stories, which are consistently bland and lacking in logic. Steiger, Drivas, and Bloom are the principals in each tale, which, while interesting conceptually, ultimately detracts from their effectiveness, since each narrative pales in comparison to the story of Carl, Will, and Felicia, and only strengthens our desire to see what becomes of them. *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN* is a rare example of a film expanding on a small segment of a book and making it as fascinating as the source material.

Image has done a fine job preserving the 2:35:1 scope aspect ratio of this Warner Bros. release. Jerry Goldsmith fans will detect a few musical cues in the soundtrack which he borrows from his own *PLANET OF THE APES* score of a year earlier.

—Michael D. Walker

THIEVES LIKE US
Image Entertainment
Three Sides CAV
Laserdisc, \$39.95

Director Robert Altman became enamored of Edward Anderson's novel *Thieves Like Us* without knowing about Nicholas Ray's 1949 filmization, entitled *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT*. Altman was intrigued by the criminal protagonists' preoccupation with their own celebrity while engineering a series of bank holdups during the Depression. He created his version and released it in 1974. Financing of a little over a million dollars was provided on the strength of the director's past success with *M*A*S*H* (1970) and *McCABE & MRS. MILLER* (1971). Considering it to be a low budget, Altman filmed almost entirely on location in Mississippi. He employed actors from his earlier films,

specifically Keith Carradine, Shelley Duvall, Bert Remsen, John Schuck, and Tom Skerritt.

Matters begin with the younger Bowie



(Carradine) fleeing from prison with two older career criminals (Remsen and Schuck) during the 1930s. The three soon establish a pattern of robbing banks and alternately laying low between jobs. Bowie meets an unsophisticated young woman, Keechie (Duvall), while in hiding, and gradually initiates a romance. Eventually the couple strike out on their own. Tragedy befalls them after Bowie springs one of his former partners from a prison farm.

Altman's adaptation of Anderson's novel treats the material with the same degree of respect that Ray's did. Both films painstakingly delineate the assorted character relationships, instead of capitalizing on action sequences. Altman expands his focus a bit more, depicting the effect of the criminal life-style on young children—a life-style encouraged by the poverty of the period.

Altman's version *does* differ markedly from Ray's in at least two respects. In the 1949 edition, the young lovers actually married (which may reflect the prevailing moral standards of motion pictures at that time). In Altman's rendition, the couple simply cohabit. The establishment of the tragic climax also varies pronouncedly in the two adaptations. Ray depicted an acquaintance betraying their whereabouts to the authorities as a bargaining chip. Bowie's (Farley Granger) preparations to leave his sleeping wife (Cathy O'Donnell) behind while launching a search for safe lodgings in Mexico take on a feeling of inexorable doom, as we suspect an ambush will occur at any moment. Altman, conversely, doesn't reveal the deception to his audience. The sudden emergence of the heavily armed lawmen comes as an unexpected shock. Both director's techniques are valid; neither denouement lessens the impact of the legal execution.

Image has released a letterboxed (1:85-

1) laserdisc of *THIEVES LIKE US*, complete with audio commentary by Robert Altman. Altman is apparently watching his production for the first time in many years. He sometimes describes the on-screen events as they occur, without editorializing. He does, however, discuss his componential choices, such as lighting, color, and pace. He also expounds on two of the central set pieces: the proliferation of Coca Cola products, and the omnipresent crimebusting radio programs, which substitute for soundtrack music.

Altman also offers stories about the creation of his low-budget film while on location. The vintage prison suits, for instance, were found at Mississippi general stores, where they had remained unsold for decades. Altman credits his ensemble of players for their beneficial familiarity, a helpful ingredient when shooting far from Hollywood facilities.

The director seems apologetic about the finished product's deliberate pace. He seems to regard it as anachronistic, commenting that no one would cut it that way today. Altman even theorizes that the film's cumulative effect might be termed "European." But he shouldn't feel the need to apologize to the post MTV *SHORT CUTS* generation—the production stands tall on its own merits.

The laser preserves the visual concept of *THIEVES LIKE US*, with its artfully recreated period lighting schemes and letterboxed images of rundown rural buildings. The colors are muted, due to weather conditions at the time of filming. The source print contains no speckling or other impairments. Brief supplementary features include a theatrical trailer, color cast portraits, B&W production stills, and two posters.

Although the photographs are pleasing, the trailer is offensive. Not only does the preview begin by depicting the climactic ambush, but it keeps cutting back to that sequence during the two minute running time. Since Altman carefully avoided tipping off his audience to the approaching calamity, the explicit trailer serves as a debasement of his artistic intention. We should not be subjected to viewing Shelley Duvall shouting Bowie's name as a hail of bullets commences. Probably, the filmmaker wasn't personally involved with the marketing of his project.

—John F. Black

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT
Warner Home Video
Two Sides CLV
Laserdisc, \$29.95

It's a Kodak—no, a Kosleck moment. As *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* approaches its explosive climax, having already treated fans to a remarkable array of character actors and comics (Conrad Veidt, Jane Darwell, Frank McHugh, Peter Lorre, Judith Anderson, William Demarest, Jackie Gleason, Phil Silvers, Wallace Ford, Barton MacLane, Edward Brophy, Ludwig Stossel, James Burke, and Ben Welden, among others), up pops

Martin Kosleck as (surprise!) a Nazi to do a double-talk routine with star Humphrey Bogart. If the supporting players of Hollywood's Golden Era were often the icing on the studio cake, *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* is a dessert almost too rich for modern consumption. (The title, by the way, is not derived from the ditty Cole Porter wrote for *ANYTHING GOES*, but is a new tune by Johnny Mercer and Arthur Schwartz.)

Imagine a Damon Runyon story designed for Alfred Hitchcock and you've got a pretty good idea of what this 1942 Warner Bros. feature has going for it. Bogie is Broadway promoter Gloves Donahue, fixing bets and arranging floating crap games with his gang of colorfully-christened cohorts (Demarest as Sunshine, Gleason as Starchie, Ford as Spats, etc.) True to the dictates of Runyonland, Gloves must have his three daily servings of cheesecake, and said cheesecake can only come courtesy of Miller's Bakery. When Miller (Stossel) is rubbed out by a bug-eyed Nazi pianist named Pepi (Lorre, and don't ask), and a mystery woman (Kaaren Verne) disappears from the scene of the crime, Gloves is persuaded by his doting mom (Darwell) to investigate. The trail leads to a second murder (Brophy) at a hot nightspot, an auction house at which the good guys and the bad guys



rub elbows (shades of *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*), a mad chase through Central Park, an ineffectual investigation by the cops (also shades of *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*), and a showdown on the East River that sends the head Nazi (Veidt) and his Nazi dachshund (uncredited) to their doom.

The script, of course, isn't really by Damon Runyon (it's attributed to Edwin Gilbert, Leo Rosten, and Leonard Spigelgass) and the director isn't that roly-poly Master of Suspense from England. Vincent Sherman is at the helm, and the veteran director keeps things moving so smoothly that there's nary a dull moment in *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT*'s 107-minute running time. Bogart wears his

role like a glove, juggling the action and comedy with considerable charm, and the rest of the cast is every inch as good as we expect them to be, with Demarest contributing a pratfall and a Nazi impression undoubtedly purloined from Paramount's Preston Sturges.

There is some minor and infrequent speckling on the print, but overall the image is clear and crisp, with rich, velvety blacks for the many outdoor night scenes. Laserdisc may be gasping its last despite the protests of its many fans, but if *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* is any indication it's dying a beautiful death.

—Richard Valley

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

The Roan Group

Two Sides CLV

Laserdisc, \$49.95

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN (1957) is an atypical Hammer effort more dependent on suggestion and inference than explicit supernatural imagery. John Rollason (Peter Cushing) is a dedicated botanist headquartered in a remote Himalayan monastery, with the indulgence of its Llama (Arnold Marle). The holy man's command of thought transference reveals that another expedition is fast approaching. That one is spearheaded by the ironically named Tom Friend (Forrest Tucker), an abrasive "great white hunter" searching for the Yeti.

Rollason is aware of Friend's designs and even plans to marshal forces with him. The botanist isn't above a dash of conniving, although he hasn't deduced that Friend's agenda targets the capture and subsequent commercial exploitation of the fabled beings. The two men's joint venture suffers fatal consequences, with most of their party perishing. The Yeti, it can be argued, aren't directly responsible, even though a man dies of fright after viewing them. Rollason becomes the sole survivor after being returned to safety by the ancient race. Although his customary role as a scientist is to substantiate his research, he uncharacteristically chooses to preserve their sanctity by eschewing knowledge of their existence.

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN provides an awe-inspiring depiction of the Yeti, although its members are never

foundly respect them, while the interloping Caucasians envision them as potentially terrifying monsters to be studied and/or showcased. We glimpse an arm here, a shadow there, and various sets of footprints. But we learn about them primarily through the contradicting perceptions of the humans situated in their environment.

The film's opening act is largely expository, concocting a mythology for the Yeti and the culture which envelops them. The gradual trek through the Himalayas becomes more suspenseful because we're not certain what to anticipate. Will the Snowmen be refined entities, or savage beasts? While the journey occurs in the expansive mountain range, many of the film's set pieces project a more claustrophobic terror. The inclement weather increases the sense of isolation from civilization, rendering the various encampments and caverns as dubious havens at best.

The Roan laserdisc presents *THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN* in its 2:35-1 Hammerscope (Dyaliscope) aspect ratio. The resulting compositions are superior to older television prints that cropped much of the surrounding elements. The source material contains few blemishes, but can't avoid looking its age. This is probably the best presentation we're likely to see of this film. Analog track one features audio commentary by director Val Guest and writer Nigel Kneale. Recorded separately, the two colleagues provide an overlapping study of the production's details. Both discuss the assorted locales utilized: sets at Bray and Pinewood, plus location shooting in Switzerland and the French Pyrenees.

The commentary track is at its best when confined to the subject at hand. Guest relates that the Tibetan "monks" were actually recruited from the wait staffs of London's Chinese restaurants! Some later anecdotes, centering on recollections of Alfred Hitchcock and music hall comedian Will Hay, veer from the topic (amusing though they may be). Kneale and Guest remain gentlemen even when offering minor criticisms. Kneale feels that Guest "carved up" his longer BBC version, and possibly should have revealed more about the Yeti visually. Guest holds firm on his concept of only suggesting the creatures. Both cite the professionalism of Cushing and Tucker, and effusively praise production designer Bernard Robinson's amazing logistical matching of the British sets with the location photography.

Roan has also supplied a couple of supplements. A pressbook insert contains an exhaustive, blow-by-blow plot description, accompanied with photos rather than the usual poster reproductions. A fuzzy,

nonanamorphic American theatrical trailer peddles its hyperbole in a near-shivering tone of voice, as though the pitchman is speaking directly from the frigid Himalayas.

—John F. Black

THE LOST CONTINENT

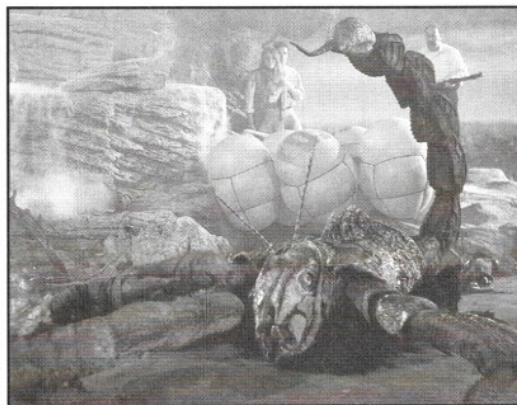
Elite Entertainment

Two Sides CLV

Laserdisc, \$39.95

THE LOST CONTINENT (1968) has never been considered among the Hammer Films' elite. Its lackluster creatures and plot implausibilities, however, have produced the side effect of consigning it to "guilty pleasure" status among many Hammer buffs.

The opening credits unfold while superimposed across outtakes from the studio's earlier *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* (1966). The mysterious burial at sea is striking in its incongruity: modern day mourners stand alongside Spanish conquistadors dressed in full battle regalia.



From this arresting beginning, the remainder of the story is communicated via flashbacks.

A tramp steamer is making a voyage to South America. The captain (Eric Porter) and his passengers prove to be a "ship of fools," with everyone concealing their unsavory pasts. The captain receives an urgent dispatch warning of an impending hurricane, which he simply tears in half—this, in spite of a 10-ton cargo of explosive materials hidden below deck. With such a formula for disaster, this voyage of the damned couldn't possibly get any worse, could it?

Well yes, it actually could—and does. The passengers' treacherous pathway meanders through an uncharted sea populated by giant octopi, killer seaweed, and misshapen land monstrosities. The ones who survive these unnatural obstacles are then captured by a race of descendant conquistadors. The Spaniards are the subjects of the boy despot El Supremo (Darryl Read), who is in turn manipulated by a diseased Inquisitor (Eddie Powell). Among other tools of torture, the Inquisitor has been blessed by the presence of a thing in a pit (the screen's finest vagina monster since Frances Ford Coppola's 1963 insert work for *BATTLE BEYOND THE SUN*).



shown in their entirety. Different characters' viewpoints construct a mental image of them. The native Himalayans pro-

THE LOST CONTINENT provides as many chuckles as it does chills. The assorted creatures never appear animated enough to provide genuine menace. The employment of gas-filled balloons to facilitate walking over the lethal seaweed may be an intriguing notion, but the resultant slower pace of movement causes chase and battle sequences to lumber along. The casting of supporting actress Dana Gillespie is also ripe for guffaws; her heaving cleavage suggests a typical Russ Meyer boobsploitation epic. (Gillespie, two decades later, forged a new career as a blues shouter, successfully covering such risqué nuggets as "If I Can't Sell It, I'm Just Gonna Sit on It").

A major camp element of the film is the dichotomous musical score. Gerard Schurmann's contribution, with its James Bernardian ensemble of shrieking stringed instruments, pumps needed adrenaline into the special effects scenes. But this is offset by embarrassingly light-hearted pop motifs that call attention to themselves at the expense of the gloomy dramatic tension. The opening credit crawl boasts a treacly Tom Jones-styled ballad warbled by The Peddlers (who would subsequently "grace" the soundtrack of the kinky 1970 horror GOODBYE GEMINI). Other instrumental interludes recall the hepcat samba stylings of Brazilian jazz organist Walter Wanderley.

THE LOST CONTINENT was adapted from Dennis Wheatley's 1938 novel *Uncharted Seas*. Hammer had previously filmed another Wheatley work, THE DEVIL RIDES OUT (1968), polishing it with credible details of Satanic rituals. This, their second Wheatley adaptation (1978's TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER would be their third, and final) failed to measure up to their previously established standard. The creatures and the conquistadors are never adequately rationalized, only trotted out to provide one-dimensional thrills. The boy despot El Supremo is confusingly referred to as El Diablo by a supporting character, as well as being listed as such in the closing credits. I haven't read Wheatley's book, but I assume that this author would have established the characters in a more coherent fashion.

The Elite Entertainment laserdisc offers a handsome edition of the film as part of their ongoing Hammer Collection. The aspect ratio, letterboxed at 1:77-1, provides a wider dimension for the many vistas of shipwrecks and mist-enshrouded landscapes. The murky Expressionistic cinematography is arguably THE LOST CONTINENT's strongest attribute. The transfer from the original 35mm Interpositive embellishes the subtleties of the art direction when compared to existing TV prints. The film's conceptual visual haze always tended to become monotonous in lesser quality depictions.

Elite has restored the running time to the original European duration of 97 minutes, a treat for Hammer completists. I do feel that the jacket's statement about

missing footage having been "cut by the film's original distributor because of its adult nature" may be somewhat misleading. Certainly nothing has been restored that compares with the recent full-length laserdisc prints of TWINS OF EVIL (1971), COUNTESS DRACULA (1971), and VAMPIRE CIRCUS (1972). After all, Suzanna Leigh's skimpy cocktail dresses and Dana Gillespie's bosomy superstructure have always been on parade throughout the edited versions. Those who might hope to discover a nude version of THE LOST CONTINENT may well be disappointed, although the added material does flesh out the characters and their development.

The film is followed by a pan-and-scan theatrical preview (which exhorts "Monster weed. Attacking helpless beauties") and two brief B&W TV trailers that concoct a collage of cacophonous screamers.

—John F. Black

Q (THE WINGED SERPENT)

Elite Entertainment

Two Sides CLV

Laserdisc, \$39.95

Watching a film like Q today gives me an incredible rush of nostalgia. Not that I had any particular fondness for it when it originally came out in 1982, but it reminds me of days when an independent film did not mean "multimillion-dollar Academy Award contender," the letters CGI meant nothing, and going to one of those new multiplex cinemas meant that you could see the latest Spielberg chum and a movie that begins with the words "Samuel Z. Arkoff Presents."

Larry (the IT'S ALIVE and MANIAC COP trilogies, GOD TOLD ME TO, and THE STUFF) Cohen's story of Aztec gods and monsters is a blending of the giant monster movie and a cops and robbers yarn—THE GIANT CLAW meets RESERVOIR DOGS. Michael Moriarty is wonderful as the pathetically inept crook Jimmy Quinn. After losing the goods in a

visit, Shepard is convinced that the deaths are sacrificial and are meant to summon the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl.

Cohen has crafted a great minor horror gem with Q (THE WINGED SERPENT is only used on the promotional material and is not on screen), populated with multidimensional characters that actually develop as the movie progresses. The modern horror film has the annoying tendency to have the major characters give a little one-shot monologue/anecdote about themselves and that is supposed to provide all the depth/background/motivation we need—one time, in a neat little package, usually to foreshadow whatever fate befalls them. Michael Moriarty's character is brilliantly portrayed and written. He is whiny, a loser, a wannabe, a bully to his girl friend, resourceful when pushed and when he has the upper hand, pompous and self-serving. However, by the end of the film, thanks entirely to Moriarty's performance, you feel he has really changed.

Cohen also delivers on the title creature. Quetzalcoatl is a great movie monster handled in a great movie monster way. For the first two-thirds of the film, all we get are glimpses. These teases are almost always incorporated with a violent and bloody death—a sunbather being ripped from her lawn chair on the top of a building or a window washer getting his head torn off. We're left wanting more, and when we finally get to see the beast in all its stop-motion glory, it's in a great KING KONG shoot-out atop the Chrysler Building.

Elite Entertainment delivers another outstanding job with the laserdisc. This is probably as good as the film ever looked. The image is solid and presented at approximately 1:85. The 20 chapter stops are sufficient and well titled. The sound is very strong. (Just listen to that wind in the Chrysler Tower dome!) The only complaint I have is the lack of supplements. The film only runs 93 minutes. Surely there was a trailer or some promotional stills or poster art that could have been thrown on to fill Side Two.

Despite the minor shortcomings, Elite has once again given a cult classic film a fantastic face lift for everyone to enjoy.

—Jeff Allen



diamond heist, he hides out in the dome of the Chrysler Building, only to discover a huge egg in a giant nest and several bloodied skeletons strewn about.

Meanwhile, Detectives Shepard and Powell (David Carradine and Richard Roundtree) are investigating bizarre deaths involving a skinned corpse and a body with its heart expertly cut out. All this while, the citizens of New York are occasionally showered with blood and body parts from the sky. After a museum

THE EXORCIST

25th Anniversary Edition

Warner Brothers

Three Sides CLV

Laserdisc, \$49.95

The 25th Anniversary Edition of William Friedkin's THE EXORCIST finally documents one of the definitive horror films in such a way that would make the Devil himself proud. Based on William Peter Blatty's blockbuster novel, THE EXORCIST caused more than a few spinning heads when it opened in 1974. Protestors screamed about it in the streets, the clergy denounced it from their pulpits, and the press (and public) devoured it with satanic relish.

Father Merrin (Max Von Sydow), a Roman Catholic priest/archaeologist, unleashes the demon Pazuzu while on a dig in Northern Iraq. The demon manifests itself in the body of teenager Regan MacNeil (Linda Blair), daughter of famous film actress Chris MacNeil (Ellen Burstyn). The young girl transforms from a sweet and innocent daughter into a vile, perverse mockery of a human. Foul language, disgraceful acts with a crucifix, and the mysterious death of Burke Dennings (Jack MaGowran) are only the beginning of the evil that awaits. After medical tests fail to determine any illness, Chris enlists the aid of Father Karras (Jason Miller). Together with Merrin, they enact an ancient Roman Catholic ritual to rid Regan of her troubles.

This disc presents the film for the first time in its correct theatrical aspect ratio of 1.78:1. The transfer is absolutely gorgeous, displaying very rich tones of color. The opening black-and-white to color



shot of the Iraqi sunrise is truly stunning, as are the deep tones of blue present in the bedroom during the actual exorcism. The sound also works quite well, having been remastered in AC-3 Dolby Digital surround. The musical score benefits the most in this respect, from the haunting melody of Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" to the jarring pieces by Penderecki and George Crumb.

The disc also rates quite high in the supplements department. On the Analog Left channel, Friedkin offers a fascinating commentary. Subjects such as casting, camera angles, music, the original screenplay, and deleted scenes are discussed in a very thoughtful and provocative manner. For what he lacks in on-set anecdotes, he more than compensates for by discussing the more technical aspects of the film's production. Friedkin also provides a brief, all-new introduction to the film at the beginning of the disc.

Additionally, THE FEAR OF GOD is presented at the program's conclusion. This is a 35-minute excerpt of a much longer BBC documentary about the film, and showcases new interviews with

Friedkin, Blatty, Ellen Burstyn, Linda Blair, Jason Miller, Max Von Sydow, Father William O'Malley, and makeup effects artist Dick Smith, among others. While tons of anecdotes and rare behind-the-scenes clips are to be savored, the highlight here is the first-ever legitimate release of the infamous "spider-walk" scene, which occurs right after Chris has learned of the death of Dennings. Bent over backward at the waist, Regan descends the stairs like a giant spider, flicking her tongue, and chases Chris to the doorway. A collection of three theatrical trailers round out the package, but it should be noted that one of the trailers here is different from those included on the corresponding VHS release of this edition.

—Brooke Perry

THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS
Warner Home Video
Two Sides CLV
Laserdisc, \$34.95

When one thinks of horror films, Warner Bros. rarely comes to mind. However, in 1946 the studio released an often overlooked little gem in THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS.

The story begins with a partially paralyzed concert pianist, Ingram (Victor Francen), retired to his Italian mansion and cared for by his nurse, Julie (Andrea King), and personal secretary, Hilary (Peter Lorre). Ingram is reliant on Julie, so much so that he becomes violently angry, nearly strangling Hilary and leaving hideous marks upon his neck, when Hilary reveals Julie's plans to leave with her beau, Conrad (Robert Alda). Later that night, Ingram falls to his death on the steep main staircase. Suspensions arise when his will reveals his entire estate has been left to Julie. Ingram's brother and nephew (Charles Dingle and John Arlin) suspect Julie and Conrad of foul play, retaining Ingram's lawyer (David Hoffmann), who is eager to switch sides for a larger payoff. Not long afterwards, the lawyer is murdered, his neck bearing similar marks to those left on Hilary. A broken window at Ingram's crypt leads to the discovery that his left hand is missing. Could it be Ingram's ghostly appendage exacting revenge?

Curt Siodmak's lean script (based on the short story "The Beast," by William Fryer Harvey) builds suspense while avoiding many horror cliches. The leading lady never faints and even manages to fend for herself at one point, outwitting the killer. The Commissar (J. Carrol Naish) is not a caricature; he's smart and methodical. And the leading man doesn't do anything heroic!

Making the most of their roles are Naish and Lorre. Naish is a true surprise. He is superb as the local police chief. Lorre easily depicts the mental anxiety of Hilary's psyche. We expect as much from Lorre (sadly typecast most of his career), of course, but it doesn't detract from his performance.

Another admirable quality of this film is the smooth direction of Robert Florey. Each scene is carefully staged and tightly framed. One shot, of three men peering out the broken window of the crypt while we hear their voices echoing eerily within, is particularly impressive. Even the cliché of a lurking figure's reflection suddenly appearing in a mirror is well executed, as is a sly homage to Fritz Lang



when Lorre flicks open a switchblade knife just as he did in the classic M (1931).

The single flaw of this wonderful film comes in its last minute, when the psychological suspense is brushed off as a joke. (Siodmak and Florey are both on record as objecting to the studio's interference with the ending.) Image's digital video transfer runs 88 minutes and is clear with brief but noticeable print wear.

—Michael D. Walker

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG
Image Entertainment
Two Sides CLV
\$29.95

Disney's remake of the 1949 stop-motion favorite MIGHTY JOE YOUNG is a pleasant surprise. The surprise is that, having spent so much time muttering abuses at Disney for being presumptuous enough to remake such a classic, I actually liked it! It won me over because it was written with obvious respect for the original, and produced with equal care.

The original film gave us one of the most expressive and sympathetic stop-motion characters ever. The title character was a giant gorilla four times larger than normal size, but with the disposition of a pussycat. Brought to America from his African home with his lifelong playmate Jill Young, Joe fell into misunderstanding and adventure in the big city. The giant gorilla, animated by KING KONG creator Willis O'Brien and talented newbie Ray Harryhausen, was almost a better actor than his human associates, and while the film itself was nothing more than an entertaining fantasy, Mister Joseph Young himself became a beloved icon among genre aficionados.

The new film is faithful to the original plot with some modern alterations. For one, the opening is more harrowing than the original. Jill Young (Charlize Theron) grows up in Africa studying mountain gorillas with her Dian-Fosseyesque mother (and who better to play the mother of an-

gel-faced Theron than equally angel-faced Linda Purl?). One night, when Jill is eight, evil poachers (Rade Sherbedgia and Peter Firth) come to the mountain. They kill a mother gorilla to get her baby for a black market animal trade, and when Jill's mother interferes they kill her too. Jill and the baby gorilla, named Joe, are bonded by the tragedy.

Twelve years later, adventurous naturalist Gregg O'Hara (Bill Paxton) comes to Africa to study the fauna. (The 1949 film, in the spirit of its time, had featured promoters looking for a nightclub animal act.) While O'Hara is studying a caged leopard, a 2,000-pound gorilla jumps out of the bush, sits anywhere it wants, and frees the leopard. O'Hara and his team try to chase down the huge beast, but it wrecks their vehicles and shakes off their tranquilizers. O'Hara manages to keep following on foot until the gorilla catches him. Happily for the naturalist, a beautiful blonde steps out of the jungle and tells the gorilla to drop him. This is Jill and Joe grown up—only Joe didn't know when to stop.

While the first film had the promoters bring Jill and Joe to New York to do a nightclub act, the remake gives us the enlightened nineties take: O'Hara talks Jill into bringing Joe to California, where he can live safe from poachers in an animal park and educate people about the plight of endangered gorillas. After Joe is settled in his new digs, a giant monkey wrench is thrown in: the evil poachers see him on the news and decide to finish the job. Going to the park, they taunt Joe. A word of advice to bad guys: never taunt a 2,000-pound gorilla. He recognizes them and goes ape, breaking out of his enclosure. Joe's angry efforts to get the men who killed his mother are mistaken by everyone but Jill as a berserk rampage, leading the film into an exciting chase. The film ends as the original, with Joe redeeming himself by risking his life to save a child from a fire. Yeah, it's sappy, but trust me, you'll go with it . . .



The film uses every state-of-the-art effects trick in the book *except* stop-motion. Rick Baker (who else?) provided a series of utterly realistic gorilla suits (with veteran ape actor John Alexander inside); shots of Joe running and interacting with vehicles and people are photo-perfect computer-generated animations; and closeups of Jill and Joe together use a life-sized animatronic. Any differences between Joes are undetectable. If the original film was a showcase for stop-motion and film effects, the remake is an equally brilliant showcase for modern digital, mechanical, and makeup effects.

The remake of MIGHTY JOE YOUNG is exactly what the original MIGHTY JOE YOUNG was: a lightweight but very entertaining fantasy effects film.

—John E. Payne

SATAN'S SADISTS

The Roan Group

Two Sides CLV

\$49.95

The Roan Group has added the low-budget biker effort SATAN'S SADISTS (1969) to their eclectic Laserdisc Classics line. The title itself is a notorious late sixties artifact never forgotten by drive-in theater habitués—or by bumfuzzled patrons of finer soundtrack retailers, who were stunned to discover such a title among works by Bernard Herrmann, Miklos Rozsa, and other composers.

The film depicts the itinerant life-style of the Satans motorcycle club. The members are not philosophical easy riders, preferring to ride roughshod over anyone in their path. A "hog" breaking down represents the greatest level of pathos in their existence. Brief mentions of parental abuse and police brutality hardly justify the gang's spree of raping and killing. The agent of their eventual demise, a recently discharged Vietnam veteran, seems more reactionary than ironic.

Is SATAN'S SADISTS a truly good film? Not really. Yet, it has survived as a piece of graffiti from an era characterized by its societal alternatives. But with anger as the sole source of motivation, it's difficult to care about any of the characters. The second half becomes something of a chase film, but it's the kind of chase in which neither victims nor perpetrators travel with any sense of urgency.

Producer/director Al Adamson wisely decided to shoot in 16mm for later 35mm blowup, conserving valuable funds for the recruitment of a "name" cast. Thus, his ensemble boasts fading stars Scott Brady, Kent Taylor, and Russ Tamblyn ("in his greatest role since WEST SIDE STORY"); exploitation cinema vets Gary Kent and John Cardos; future directors Greydon Clark and William Bonner; and the pendulous pulchritude of Regina Carrol. They would all have been considered bottom-feeders by the Hollywood elite, but Adamson's strategy paid off. The film played drive-ins for years, later maintaining a presence in the home-video marketplace.

The evocative background score, complete with countercultural ditties, was composed by Harley Hatcher and performed by The Nightriders. "Satan," which accompanies the opening credits, could probably be reissued today to mass acceptance from the youthful music-buying public. Most of the songs contribute depth to the superficial script. Oddly, however, "mama" Regina Carrol's suicide is scored with a comparatively uptempo pop ballad entitled "Is It Better to Have Loved and Lost, Than to Have Never Loved at All." The vintage Mercury/Smash soundtrack LP remains a collector's item to this day.

Roan's transfer is a good one. The 1:66-1 aspect ratio aids cinematographer Gary Graver's compositions, although a couple of opening credit lines are cropped at the side. The color values are fine, considering the blowup from 16mm. In fact, the blood is so red that it suggests a Hammer Films' Technicolor level of resolution. Many of the scenes occur outdoors, so lighting and sound recording inconsistencies are inherent in the original filmmaking process.

Sam Sherman, president of Independent-International Pictures, discusses the film on a supplementary audio commentary track. He admits to "narrator's cramp," partially due to Al Adamson's untimely death. Beginning with a behind-the-scenes look at the assembly of the project, Sherman picks up steam as he proceeds through the minutiae of marketing and distribution deals. He also pauses to illustrate how the plot stems from the traditional Western, later alluding to Adamson's father having directed poverty row cowboy pictures.

Sherman includes a few personal anecdotes regarding the cast and crew, but his primary focus remains with the logistics of the production. Those intrigued by the business aspects of promoting exploitation cinema will thoroughly enjoy his talk. He has also included an original trailer preview for SATAN'S SADISTS, which sympathetically describes the biker gang's plight as "a rebellion of human garbage."

—John F. Black

PYRO

The Roan Group

Two Sides CLV

\$49.95

PYRO (1961/1964) is a putative horror exercise produced by Sidney Pink in Madrid. The American leading actors are supported by a Spanish cast and crew. Completed in 1961, it surfaced in 1964 on the bottom half of AIP double bills. Often paired with such "A" releases as GOLIATH AND THE VAMPIRES, MUSCLE BEACH PARTY, and THE COMEDY OF TERRORS, the film failed to achieve lasting success. While not sufficiently sophisticated to be considered serious adult drama, it also contains a hard-edged atmosphere that isn't appropriate for kiddie matinee fodder, either.



Vance Pierson (Barry Sullivan) has converted his lifelong obsession with ferris wheels into the creation of a revolutionary generator. Accompanied by his wife and daughter, he relocates to Spain to supervise its construction. Feeling trapped by his predictable life-style, he's hoping that the move will invigorate him. That it does, in the person of Laura Blanco (Martha Hyer), a brassy blonde planning to burn her house for an insurance scam. The two begin talking trash as soon as they meet, parlaying their mutual badi-nage into a five-month affair. He instructs her, "As long as we keep peace at home, I'll be needing violence." She's only too willing to accommodate him.

Pierson's eventual attempt to salvage his marriage and reputation by breaking off with Laura goes awry when she torches his house. Not only is his family destroyed, but the engineer suffers fourth-degree burns when he returns home unexpectedly. Laura visits him in the hospital, but he's understandably embittered and vows to stir up some old embers—culminating in her death by fire.

The remainder of the piece plays like a psychological game of cat and mouse, with Laura living in seclusion. Pierson, sporting a disguise, finds work with an itinerant carnival. His associate's teen-aged daughter, Liz (Soledad Miranda,

who would later grace several Jess Franco shockers before her untimely death), falls in love with him, but is unable to deter him from his fatal path.

PYRO never became an AIP perennial, possibly due to its dark tone. There are no heroes to root for, only hate-ridden protagonists. There's a certain morbid fascination in this material, but not enough pathos to inspire repeat viewings. Laura's daughter is finally spared, but that's a muted happy ending at best: the young girl has already displayed pyromaniacal tendencies of her own.

The production betrays an uneven quality. Some elements, such as the leading performances and Barry Sullivan's gruesome makeup, are grimly effective. But the storytelling itself is ragged. The plot's events are recounted in lengthy flashbacks by Pierson's local assistant, Julio (Fernando Hilbeck), yet the film doesn't return to him at the conclusion. (Julio's florid dialogue recalls another Sidney Pink opus, 1963's *THE CASTILIAN*, which featured embarrassing musical narration performed by wandering troubadour Frankie Avalon.) Details are introduced and then abandoned, such as Laura's daughter being the product of incest, as well as her budding propensity to start fires. The musical accompaniment is shrill, sounding more like mismatched library cues than a true background score. The cinematography is occasionally compromised by jarring editing.

Roan's laserdisc presents PYRO in a 1:66-1 aspect ratio. The colors appear faded in several scenes, reflecting the original theatrical release. The source material is acceptable for this comparatively rare thriller, although a variety of speckles and print scratches crop up periodically. The company has included two supplements. A four-page pressbook reproduction offers biographical studies of Sullivan and Hyer, in addition to an essay describing the logistics of filming in Spain. The disc's first two chapters feature introductory remarks by Sidney Pink on the left analog channel, in which he fondly recollects the making of his film. With his autobiography of some years ago in mind, one might have hoped for a full-running audio commentary. Still, it's nice to hear from him, however briefly.

—John F. Black

SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN
Warner Home Video
One Side/CLV
Laserdisc, \$34.95

By the time *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN* began production on July 30th, 1951, the Man of Steel had already visited the silver screen in two incarnations: as an animated cartoon character (voiced by radio's Superman, Clayton "Bud" Collyer) in 17 stunningly beautiful Fleischer Studio shorts, and in two live action Columbia serials (1948's *SUPERMAN* and 1950's *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN*) portrayed by Kirk Alyn. Bob Maxwell, the producer of *SUPERMAN* on

radio, began searching for a new Man of Steel for what would be the pilot movie for a TV series. After hundreds of auditions, he chose George Reeves to fill the suit, and history was made.

SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN is the man from Krypton's first full-length movie. The drama begins with reporters Clark Kent (Reeves, of course) and Lois Lane (Phyllis Coates) coming to the small town of Silsby to cover the world's deepest oil well. Unfortunately, the well has been closed and is being dismantled, and no satisfactory reason is given as to why. It is soon revealed that the foreman, Corrigan (Walter Reed), began getting samples that had a strange glow, which grew brighter the deeper they drilled. Corrigan was fearful that they had hit a radium source. Soon, creatures are spotted that leave the same strange glow on everything they touch.

News of monsters spreads and a lynch mob, headed by Luke Benson (Jeff Corey), set out to kill them. Clark must become Superman to protect the Mole Men from the townspeople (and the townspeople from themselves). Of course, the Mole Men turn out to be mere curious visitors, the glow a harmless phosphorescent. The people of Silsby learn a lesson about tolerance, setting the moral tone for the TV episodes to follow. (The film was later edited down to become the two-part episode "The Unknown People.")

George Reeves gives, hands down, his best portrayal as Superman. Reeves would star as the Man of Steel in 104 episodes of *ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN*, before his death, but *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN* offered Reeves an especially good script that allowed him to flex not only his physical, but his acting muscles. Phyllis Coates is a splendid Lois Lane, a role she would reprise for the first season of the series. Hers is a gutsy, no nonsense, feisty Lois.

Lee Sholem's direction is fine, even if bogged down by overlong chase scenes in the second half. Sholem already had experience directing pulp heroes with *TARZAN'S MAGIC FOUNTAIN* (1949)



and *TARZAN AND THE SLAVE GIRL* (1950), and would go on to helm the wonderful *TOBOR THE GREAT* (1954), as well as many of the television episodes of Superman. He relied on some of the same

Continued on page 72

The Terrible Teens

What's the connection between three current teen comedies and the classic movie monsters of yesteryear? You'd be surprised . . .

by Drew Sullivan

Over its 72-year history, The Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences has presented a number of child actors with special honorary Oscars all their own. The list includes Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney, Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, Peggy Ann Garner, Claude Jarman Jr., Bobby Driscoll, Hayley Mills, and even the young dinosaur lover of *GORGO* (1961), Vincent Winter (though he didn't get his award for that particular monster hit). There are even two Oscars that were actually won by a couple of talented little tykes—the Best Supporting Actress Award went to Tatum O'Neal for *PAPER MOON* in 1973 and the same was won by Anna Paquin in 1993 for *THE PIANO*.

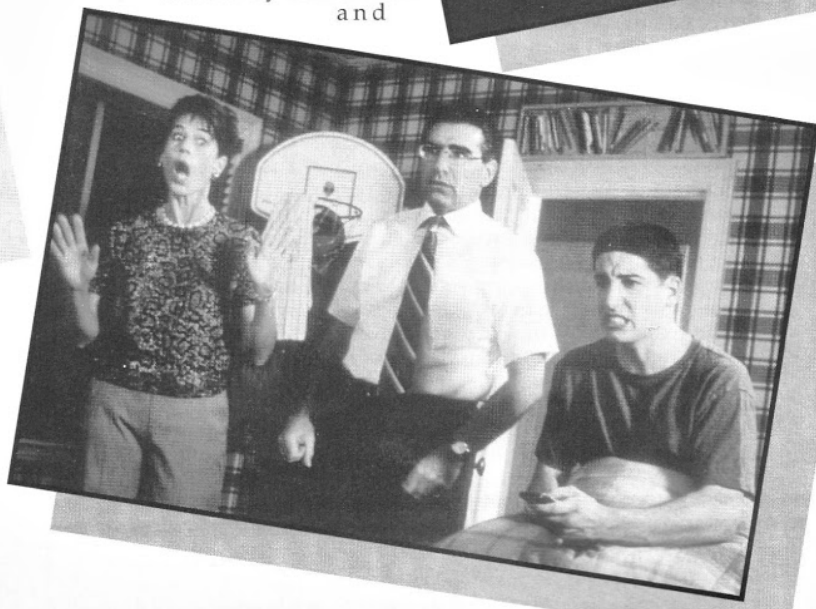
There are some pretty young kids on that list, but none quite so tender as a certain fresh-faced newcomer who's made quite a splash in several recent films. After a lengthy apprenticeship in sleazy adult films, he experienced a sudden career spurt, making his legit debut performing a truly hair-raising stunt in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY* (1998), following it up with a tasty bit in the new teen comedy *AMERICAN PIE*, and making his presence felt in Edward Furlong's pants in another spunky coming-of-age epic, *DETROIT ROCK CITY*. That's right, we're talking about *Sperm* (like Cher and Garbo and, briefly, Karloff,

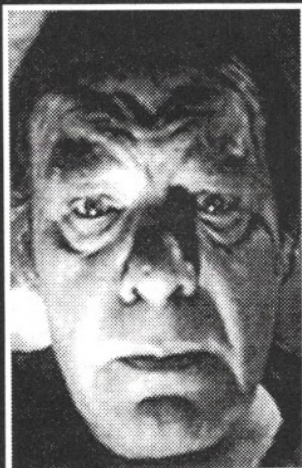
a performer who needs but one appellation to elicit immediate identification).

If it's doubtful that *Sperm* will ever step up to the podium and gush forth with a sticky acceptance speech, he is sharing the screen with some young performers who may some day attain that honor—and these up-and-comers are all connected, strangely, with the classic movie monsters of the past.

And therein hangs our tale . . .

Universal's *AMERICAN PIE* continues a beloved screen tradition stretching as far back as MGM's Andy Hardy series of the thirties and forties and beyond—the “teenager looking for love and experience” picture. Of course, *AMERICAN PIE* has a few spicy twists to it, since Andy was hardly known to search for experience with Ma Hardy's homemade apple pie. (Metro's Louis B. Mayer was certainly in favor of such deep-dish American values as mom and apple pie, but not exactly in the same way.) *AMERICAN PIE* stars Jason Biggs, Jennifer Coolidge, Shannon Elizabeth, Alyson Hannigan, Chris Klein, and Eugene Levy, the script is by Adam Herz, and the Warren Zide/Craig Perry Production is produced by Chris Weitz and





13 Demon Street

13 DEMON STREET • 1960 • b&w • Sweden • in English with Swedish subtitles
thirteen 23 minute episodes hosted by Lon Chaney Jr.

"Number 13 Demon Street. I am condemned to live here. To suffer on this earth forever as a punishment for my crime. It is said that no greater outrage was ever committed by a mortal. But should I find a crime more terrible than mine, my punishment will end." — LON CHANEY JR.

Somewhere between *One Step Beyond* and *Thriller* lies *13 Demon Street*, a thirteen episode television show created and directed by Hollywood horror veteran, CURT SIODMAK, hosted by a disheveled LON CHANEY JR., and shot in Sweden. After directing the pilot for Hammer's unsold *Tales of Frankenstein* ('58), Siodmak made a deal with LEO GUILD and KENNETH HERTS to shoot a supernatural horror anthology, *13 Demon Street*, in Stockholm's Nordisk Tonefilm studio in 1960.

But while the TV version of *13 Demon Street* was never broadcast in the U.S., it was aired in Sweden (with the simple addition of Swedish subtitles). And that's what we've found. Direct from the Land of the Midnight Sun and transferred from 35mm prints, comes this incredibly rare Something Weird exclusive, the original thirteen episodes of *13 Demon Street*. Boo!

13 Demon Street. VOLUME 1 THE BLACK HAND

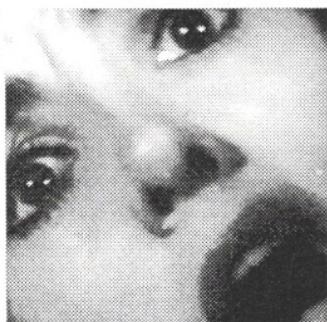
When his car is hit by a speeding driver, Dr. Heinz Schloss, a brilliant surgeon, removes his pinned hand by severing it with a scalpel. Since the driver of the other car, Erich Münster, was killed in the crash, Schloss replaces his missing hand with one of Erich's. Oops! Turns out that Mr. Münster was a psychopathic strangler of five, and before you can say, "The Hands of Orlac," the new hand of Heinz is taking on a homicidal life all its own.

FEVER

During a flu epidemic, Dr. Franz makes a housecall to crazed artist Otto Szegety, whose dingy flat is covered with paintings of the same beautiful woman. Asked who the model is, Szegety hisses, "She's mine!" But when the doctor looks out Szegety's window, he's startled to see the woman from the paintings smiling seductively at him from her house across the courtyard. A house which, apparently, doesn't really exist...

CONDEMNED IN THE CRYSTAL

"It would be awful to learn one's future," says John Radian, a man with a "fear of the future," who's suffering from a recurring nightmare in which he's drawn to a dilapidated building in a fog-shrouded alley and wakes up screaming. On the advice of his shrink, he locates the building while awake and discovers it's occupied by Madame Germaine, a fortune teller who looks into her crystal ball and tells him that he will die at midnight. How? She will be his killer... #6666



13 Demon Street. VOLUME 2

GREEN ARE THE LEAVES

A television crew arrives at Sweden's Stafsholm's Castle in the hopes of broadcasting a murderous ghost who dwells in one of the bedrooms. But when a crew member is found choked to death in the room, TV host Henry Waller and his girlfriend, Denise, foolishly decide to spend the night in the haunted bedroom. Sure enough, they too find themselves being suffocated as the dapper ghost of Erik Kirsten strolls out from an ancient painting...

THE GIRL IN THE GLACIER

A chunk of glacier is struck in a mine shaft with the figure of a nude woman, guessed to be 50,000 years old, frozen in the ice. Bringing the chunk of ice to a museum, Dr. Sven Sjöström immediately falls in love with the woman entombed in it (whom he calls Angelica) and gets upset when Olsen, a rival scientist, suggests melting the ice. Wanting her all to himself, Sven kills Olsen, buys his girlfriend-on-ice a dress and pair of shoes (!), and is shocked when she suddenly opens her eyes...

THE BOOK OF GHOULS

Finding a ritual that guarantees "untold wealth" in an old tomb, Anton Lupesco goes on a bizarre scavenger hunt in which he must bury the beak of a raven in the oldest grave in the cemetery, steal "an omen of death" from antique shopkeeper CURT SIODMAK in a silent cameo, and seek out a man who does evil and kill him. But — surprise! — there's a tiny detail he's overlooked... #6667

13 Demon Street. VOLUME 3 THE PHOTOGRAPH

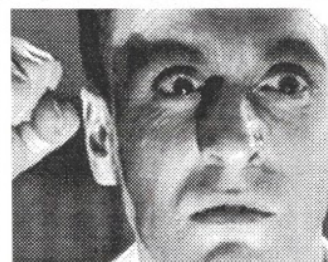
After hot shot photographer Donald Powell takes a photo of a farmhouse in snowy Maine, a beautiful woman emerges from it. He tries to embrace her but ends up strangling the woman instead. Back in New York, the photo holds a macabre surprise for him: every time he looks at it, he sees the murdered woman coming closer and closer... And watch for director CURT SIODMAK in a cameo ("I came for my dog!") that was cut when this episode was included in *The Devil's Messenger*.

THE VINE OF DEATH

Museum curator Frank Dylan is thrilled to acquire the bulbs of the ancient Mirada "death vine," puts a bulb in his pocket, and rushes home to plant it. Instead, he stumbles in on Wally, his slimy neighbor, putting the moves on his wife. After a struggle ends up in Frank being killed, his body is buried in the hot house and the death vine quickly sprouts. But as Wally soon learns, the vine is "attracted by the heat of a human body" which it wraps around and strangles... As Chaney neatly explains, "I want you to see a man who wanted to plant a flower, instead of which he dug his own grave..."

A GIFT OF MURDER

At an anniversary party, Jim and Betty Duncan receive a Haitian voodoo doll as an anonymous present, complete with instructions on how to kill one's enemies. After using the doll to eliminate two rivals at work, Jim falls in love with a secretary and decides to get rid of his wife. But as he sticks the pin in the doll's face, he doesn't notice that it's been tampered with... #6668



13 Demon Street. VOLUME 4

THE SECRET OF THE TELESCOPE

Paul Kessler buys an antique telescope at an auction. It seems ordinary enough until he looks out the window with it and sees a vision of his dead self. Convinced that his death could only be the result of his alcoholic wife murdering him, he decides to off her first by putting rat poison in her decanter of booze... (The wrap-up shows Chaney inexplicably cackling at the contents of a malignant dollhouse!)

NEVER STEAL A WARLOCK'S WIFE

Milksop banker Hubert Ames can't afford to provide his sultry wife with the wealth, clothing, and jewelry she demands, so he tries to acquire them via witchcraft. She's unimpressed: "You do the incantations and I'll do the dishes." But when he discovers that she's running away with her illicit boyfriend, Hubert reads from *The Science of Necromancy*, takes advice from a witch's cat, and conjures up a road full of flames for the fleeing lovers...

MURDER IN THE MIRROR

Hired by creepy Count Ottocar Potosi to find a specific antique mirror, Antonio Martinelli is horrified when the mirror shows him a vision of the Count suffocating Mario, his wife's lover — a murder that occurred thirty years earlier and created by the victim's "energy engraved on the glass..."

BLACK NEMESIS

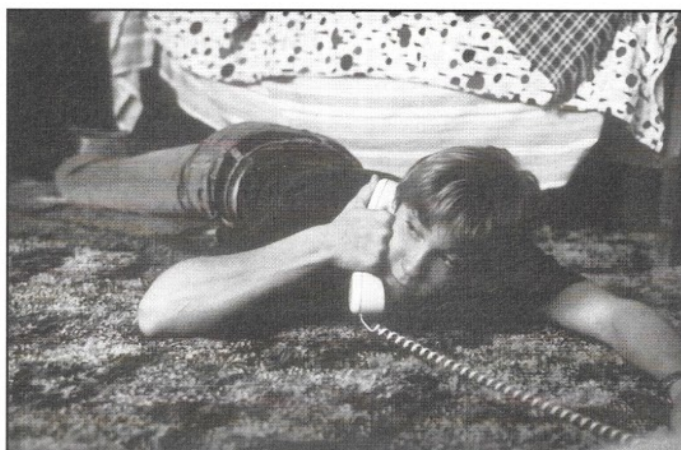
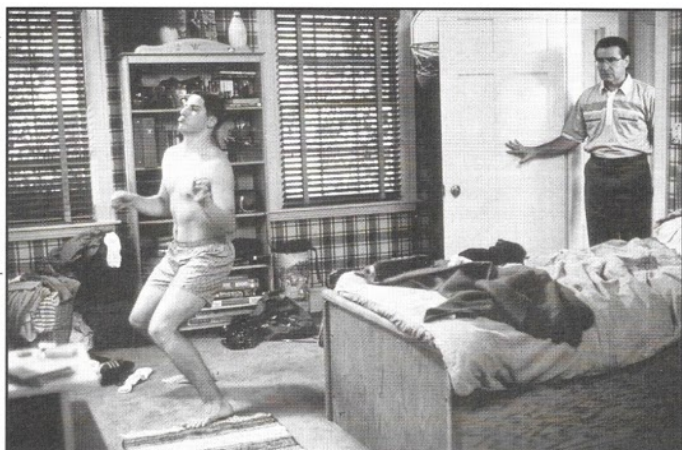
Phony medium "Monsieur" Aramit kills Dr. Robert Standish in order to scam his bereaved widow for some quick cash to pay off a gambling debt. All goes well until the doctor unexpectedly materializes when he isn't supposed to... #6669

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PAGE 26 LEFT: Jam (Sam Huntington) is a different drummer (he has no drum) in this summer's teen sex comedy **DETROIT ROCK CITY**. **PAGE 26 TOP RIGHT:** Hawk (Edward Furlong, who learned how to smile making John Water's **PECKER**) enters a strip contest to win KISS tickets in **DETROIT ROCK CITY**. **PAGE 26 BOTTOM RIGHT:** Dad (Eugene Levy) and Mom (Molly Cheek) react to another of son Jim's (Jason Biggs) efforts to lose his virginity in **AMERICAN PIE**. **LEFT:** Dad can't make much sense of son Jim in **AMERICAN PIE**. **RIGHT:** Jam tries to get off the phone and out of the house before his religious-fanatic mother puts a stop to his KISS concert plans. **PAGES 28 and 29 BOTTOM:** the winning cast of **GET REAL**, including Brad Gorton (far left) and Ben Silverstone (far right).

directed by Paul Weitz, whose grandmother was very nearly a victim of Count Dracula.

Before anyone asks what Bela Lugosi had to do with the Weitz brothers' grammy, let's make it clear that it's not Bela we're talking about here, but Carlos Villarias, who played the bloodthirsty Transylvanian count in the 1931 Spanish version of **DRACULA** that was filmed (at night) on the same sets as the Lugosi production. (The film is considered by many to be far superior to the English-language picture directed by Tod Browning.) The producer of **SPANISH DRACULA** (as it has come to be known) was Paul Kohner, who fell in love with the film's female star, Lupita Tovar (still with us at age 88). They married in 1932 and had daughter Susan (who had her own 15 minutes of fame when she was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for the 1959 remake of **IMITATION OF LIFE**). Susan married author and fashion designer John Weitz and had Chris and Paul—whose grandmother was very nearly a victim of—oh, I said that already!

Paul Kohner, who later became one of Tinseltown's most powerful agents, died in 1988. In a recent talk with the New York *Daily News*, daughter Susan said, "He represented much of the European contingent in Hollywood, including Ingmar Bergman, Liv Ullman, Maurice Chevalier, and Americans like John Huston. It's a lovely situation that's coming full circle. As children, [Chris and Paul] spent time at their grandparent's house. Wouldn't it be lovely if my father was here today to see what happened?"

The brothers Weitz got their Hollywood start writing scripts—first, an unproduced action comedy about a New York cop and a Hindu detective called **KARMA COP** and then **ANTZ**, which proved to be a hit for DreamWorks. (The

brothers' work on **ANTZ** was no picnic, their first draft taking six weeks—and the rewrites two years!)

AMERICAN PIE came easier—and raunchier—but Paul Weitz insists that it is a different kettle of fish from such previous teen sex comedies as **PORKY'S** (1981) and its sequels. He told the *Daily News*:

"In **PORKY'S**, the sexuality is all from the guys' point of view. We wanted to make sure this would be a date movie—for girls, too."

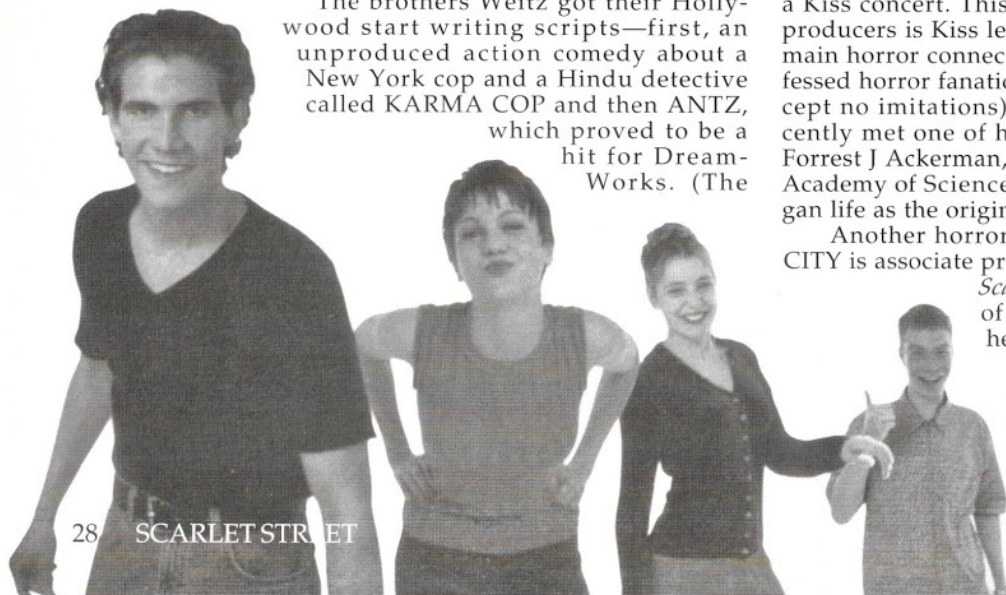
Added Chris: "I think a lot of movies talk down to teens, trying to exploit what everyone now knows is a huge market. We didn't want to keep anyone away from the movie by having recognizable teen movie stars. We were looking for good young actors who could play well off each other."

Coincidentally, considering their grandparents' vampiric legacy, they wound up with some actors who also have a background in horror: Alyson Hannigan is best known as Willow on **BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER**, and both Mena Suvari and Eddie Kaye Thomas are veterans of the recent **THE RAGE: CARRIE 2**.

Meanwhile, another current teen comedy, **DETROIT ROCK CITY** (written by Carl V. Dupre and directed by Adam Rifkin) pulls a clever switch on the ol' "eager to lose his virginity" gags. The high-school boys in this film (Edward Furlong as Hawk, Sam Huntington as Jam, James DeBello as Trip, and Guiseppe Andrews as Lex) aren't so much concerned with sex as they are with scoring tickets to a Kiss concert. This is no surprise, since one of the film's producers is Kiss lead Gene Simmons, and therein lies the main horror connection with **DETROIT**. Simmons is a confessed horror fanatic who grew up reading the original (accept no imitations) *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and recently met one of his idols, our own Crimson Columnist Forrest J Ackerman, at the 25th anniversary dinner for the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror (which began life as the original Count Dracula Society).

Another horror fan associated with **DETROIT ROCK CITY** is associate producer Tim Sullivan, like many of us at *Scarlet Street* a Jersey boy and also a friend of Scarlet Staffer Kevin G. Shinnick. (But hey, we don't hold that against him.)

Says Tim: "This movie is really a change of pace for Edward Furlong, who most horror and sci-fi fans know from **TERMINATOR II: JUDGMENT DAY**. For one thing, he smiles! For another, he performs a strip tease!"



Get Real!

by Tom Lynch

"I came late to sex. I was nearly 10." With these provocative lines, so begins the entertaining, involving, and enriching "GET REAL. The new British film centers around Steven Carter (Ben Silverstone), a 16-year-old who is clever, bold, in love . . . and gay. Besides being a keenly observant portrait of the difficulties that all young adults, gay and straight, face as we approach the new millennium, *Scarlet Street* detected some old friends while we were getting real.

To solve this mystery, and to gain insight into the many layers of this complex work, *Scarlet Street* went directly to the source, screenwriter Patrick Wilde. The clever, talented and charming Mr. Wilde is not only a writer whose credits include the innovative British TV series *THIS LIFE*, but also a successful actor and director in UK theatre.

Steven Carter lives in the London suburb Basingstoke with his mum (Jacqueta May) and dad (David Lumsden). There's also a doctor in the house, but the doctor in this house is . . . Dr. Who! For you see, Dad's hobby is the 1963-88 science fiction series. There's a Dr. Who clock in the kitchen and Dad even spends the odd weekend going to Who conventions, in full Cyberman costume. Patrick Wilde explains that director Simon Shore asked him to write the characters of Steven's parents "interesting and quirky and funny" rather than just "obstacles to Steven's happiness." Dad's interest in Dr. Who also adds some unexpected resonance. "Who are you?" demands the Dalek

voice thundering from the TV set as Steven and Dad look at each other like aliens! "What is your problem?" asks Dad. Steven can make no reply in a world where it is gay people who are often treated as real-life aliens.

Sharp-eyed viewers will also notice that among the pictures and posters adorning Steven's bedroom are Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein Monster and Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula. Horror icons next to soccer players? Well, it rings true as part of the unpredictable world of this typical, and not so typical, 16-year-old. It is "quite crucial that he is 16," according to Wilde, because in England "age of consent laws are still different for gay men and heterosexuals. The House of Commons, which has a huge lay majority, voted overwhelmingly to reduce the age of consent for gay men to 16 (the age of consent for heterosexuals), but the House of Lords, a non-elected assembly, has the power to forestall bills . . . to vote them out basically, and that's what happened."

Continued on page 73



All GET REAL photos © 1999 Paramount Classics

And Sam Huntington, who starred opposite Tim Allen in Disney's *JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE*, is really terrific. He's sort of the moral center of the film, so naturally he's the one who loses his virginity—in a church."

Furlong loses it, too, after he's picked up by an older woman in the strip club, although he's a bit premature about it . . .

Sharp-eyed moviegoers will also notice soap star Nick Scotti in the minor role of the "muscle-bound disco freak." (The film is set in the seventies.) Scotti made quite a hit in *KISS ME GUIDO* two years ago, and deserves larger parts on the big screen.

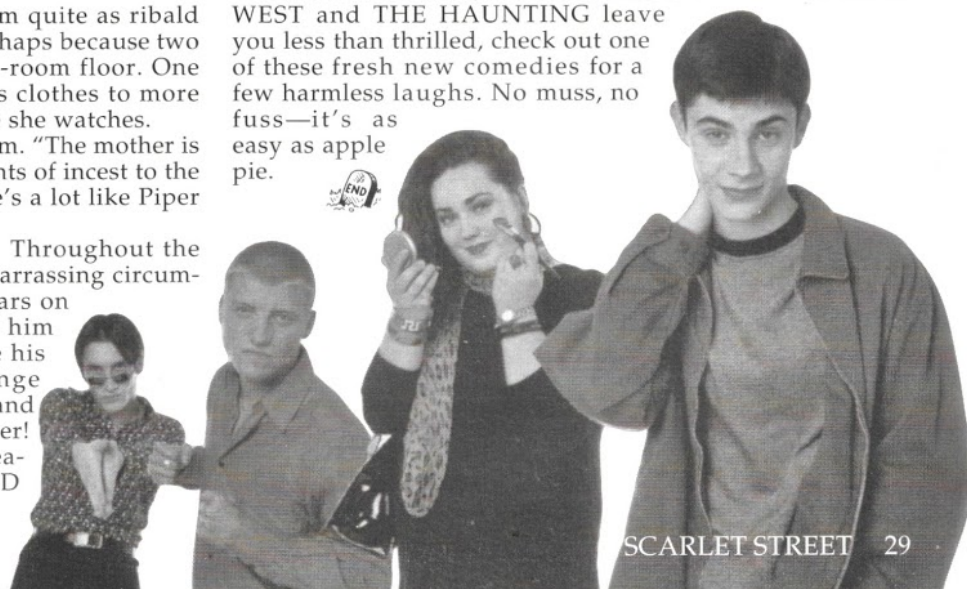
If *DETROIT ROCK CITY* doesn't seem quite as ribald as *AMERICAN PIE* (what does?), it is perhaps because two scenes found their way onto the cutting-room floor. One involved Jam being forced to change his clothes to more conservative attire by his mother—while she watches.

"It just was a little too much," says Tim. "The mother is monstrous enough without adding thoughts of incest to the mix. In fact, with her religious fervor she's a lot like Piper Laurie in *CARRIE*."


"The second scene was far funnier. Throughout the movie, Jam keeps finding himself in embarrassing circumstances just when the girl he likes appears on the scene. After the other boys rescue him from the private religious school where his mother's confined him, he tries to change his clothes while they're driving away and winds up mooning the girl and her mother! It was funny, but we had to cut it for reasons of pace. It's going to be on the DVD when it comes out, though."

Our third example of the teen comedy/horror connection, *GET REAL*, is featured above and highly recommended. A British production, it will most likely not receive wide release in the States, so be sure to keep an eye out for it when it finds its way onto video and, hopefully, DVD. Following the lead of Bill Condon's award-winning *GODS AND MONSTERS* (1998) and Harry M. Benshoff's groundbreaking study *Monsters in the Closet* (Manchester University, 1997), *GET REAL* subtly makes the "outsider" connection between gay people and our favorite monsters.

In the meantime, if the remakes of *THE WILD WILD WEST* and *THE HAUNTING* leave you less than thrilled, check out one of these fresh new comedies for a few harmless laughs. No muss, no fuss—it's as easy as apple pie.



HOUSE PARTY



HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN vs HOUSE OF DRACULA

by Ken Hanke

"I have a collection of the world's most astounding horrors."

—Dr. Gustav Neimann (Boris Karloff),
HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

By 1944, Universal's great days as the studio that made the best horror films were very much on the wane. The second wave of horror, which had begun with the first of the post Carl Laemmle "New Universal" films, *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1939), was definitely at low tide. In a critical sense, Val Lewton's RKO films had taken their toll on Universal's standing. Universal seemed to be willfully bearing out Mark Robson's assessment that the studio's prevailing idea of horror was a werewolf chasing a nightgown-clad girl up a tree. Paramount, the studio that had posed the largest threat to Universal's status as the thirties home of horror, had taken a far more restrained approach to its comparatively few horrific efforts of the forties. The results of these low-key horrors tended to make Universal's efforts look downright childish, as if everyone else (the warped delights of Monogram and PRC notwithstanding) had grown up while Universal had, if anything, regressed.

Nothing in the forties approaches Universal's achievements of the previous decade, but no one ever intended that they should. The forties Universal offerings were first and foremost designed to be fun entertainments. On that score, they generally delivered the goods. Such entertainment value is certainly a valid measure of a movie's worth. Is, for example, 1942's *CAT PEOPLE* a better film than 1942's *NIGHT MONSTER*? Of course it is, and few will seriously argue otherwise. But is *CAT PEOPLE* as much fun as *NIGHT MONSTER*? Probably not. The Universal formula (and in the forties, it was very much a formula approach) had its intellectual and artistic limitations, but the Lewton formula was limiting in its own way. Is there anything in *NIGHT MONSTER* to equal

the striking moment in *CAT PEOPLE* in which Irena (Simone Simon), in her barely glimpsed cat form, menaces Ollie Reed (Kent Smith) and Alice (Jane Randolph) in a deserted office lit only by glass-topped drawing tables? Certainly not. But neither is there anything in *CAT PEOPLE* that is as much melodramatic fun as Fay Helm's wonderfully over-the-top speech to Doris Lloyd ("You needn't tell me because I know. That spot under your hand is blood, isn't it? Blood! The whole house reeks of it!") at the beginning of *NIGHT MONSTER*.

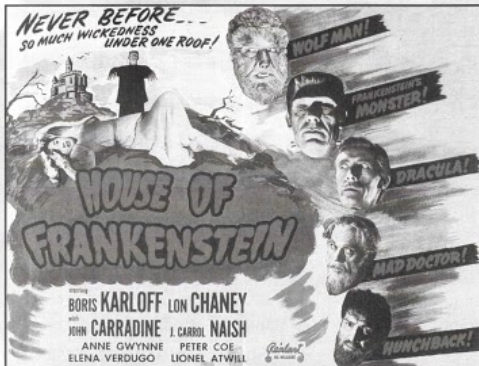
It is in this realm of sheer entertainment that the last two chapters (exempting 1948's *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*) of the studio's great Frankenstein series fall. As early as *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1942), a dearth of ideas for continuing the story line had become quite apparent. (Actually, it already had crept in around the edges in *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*, which proved what James Whale had known all along—there really wasn't anywhere to go with the Monster if the character wasn't allowed to evolve.) The law of diminishing returns had clearly caught up with the series. The first solution had been to bring together the Frankenstein Monster and Universal's newest thrill sensation, the Wolf Man, for *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943). The resulting film boasted a dynamite opening and, unfortunately, not much else of genuine note. Director Roy William Neill, a master stylist when the material suited him, seemed curiously remote once the plot got underway. The result was a film that more or less plodded along to a rousing, but inconclusive and not terribly stylish, climax. Still, the film was sufficiently popular to warrant an expansion of the idea.

If two monsters were better than one, then surely even more monsters would be just that much better! And so, out of a combination of inspiration and desperation, Curt Siodmak cooked up *THE DEVIL'S BROOD*, a high-concept





LEFT: On the road to the *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944), Dr. Gustav Neumann and the hunchbacked Daniel (Boris Karloff and J. Carrol Naish) unveil the skeleton of Count Dracula, the lead attraction of Professor Lampini's Chamber of Horrors. **RIGHT:** The title lobby card for *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. **BELOW:** Onslow Stevens as Dr. Franz Edelmann in *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945).



idea before anyone knew what "high-concept" meant. The film would offer not just the Monster and the Wolf Man, but Dracula, a mad scientist, and a generic hunchback. The original idea also included the studio's other trademarked horrors, Kharis the Mummy and the Mad Ghoul, but the notion was blessedly dropped somewhere between Siodmak's story and Edward T. Lowe's screenplay. (Why no one considered dragging in Paula Dupree, the Ape Woman; or the Invisible Man has never been recorded.) By the time the film hit theater screens, the title had been altered to *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, which, if nothing else (since it has no real meaning), was more commercial than *THE DEVIL'S BROOD*. (Anyway, the devil wasn't one of the Universal Monsters, so he could get his own publicity elsewhere.)

Of course, what set *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* apart from the films that surrounded it was the studio's splurging

for a change, coming up with enough money to bring back Boris Karloff for a two-picture deal. (*THE CLIMAX* was produced several months before *HOUSE*.) The magic of combining the Karloff and Frankenstein names was probably worth the expense, at least as far as the box office was concerned, even though Karloff wisely stuck to his guns and refused to play the Monster, here reduced to little more than a bit part. Artistically, Karloff adds a certain weight and class to the film, but is swamped by some of the scripting inanities. His role is so much in the same mold as his Columbia "Mad Doctor" roles that it seems a little old hat. It isn't that he walks through the role of Dr. Gustav Neumann, as is sometimes claimed, but rather that the role is just no great shakes. Some of his lines verge on the hopeless ("Now will you give me my chalk?" is among the ghastliest opening lines in the history of drama), while the chalk drawings on the prison walls, detailing the method for putting a man's brain in a dog's skull (building a better Lassie?) are laughably childish.

What hurts the film more than anything else is the reduction of the Frankenstein Monster to little more than a prop on an operating table for the bulk of the film. Finally, toward the end of the last reel, the prop comes to life and behaves with all the mental agility usually associated with one of the studio's nominal heroes. (Some points, however, need be awarded the Monster for possessing the perspicacity to toss J. Carrol Naish's Daniel out the window and out of the movie.)

Karloff's Monster was noble and tragic. Chaney's Monster in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* was a disconcertingly mute force of purely brutish menace. Lugosi's Monster (logically, since he had inherited Ygor's brain) was genuinely evil. This "new" Monster inherited by Glenn Strange wasn't really much of anything—though, oddly, in this film at least, Strange (taking his cues from Karloff) has moments where his pantomime decidedly echoes that of the master himself. Said Strange in an interview for *Mad Monsters Magazine* #4:

"I'd never have been the Monster I was if it hadn't been for Boris Karloff. I remember, for instance, that he was sick during some of the filming. He had finished his scenes and could have gone home, but he stayed on and worked with me. He showed me how to make the Monster's moves properly, and how to do the walk that makes the Monster so frightening...."

Karloff's tutelage is especially noticeable in the section involving the Monster's gestures as he tries to escape the requisite torch-wielding villagers, particularly in the man-



LEFT: At the beginning of *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, the bloodthirsty Count (John Carradine) shows up at the seaside castle of Dr. Franz Edelmann seeking a cure for his centuries-old vampirism. He takes time, however, to show Edelmann his mobile home. **RIGHT:** The title lobby card for *HOUSE OF DRACULA*. **BELOW:** Martha O'Driscoll as Nurse Miliza Morelle in *HOUSE OF DRACULA*.

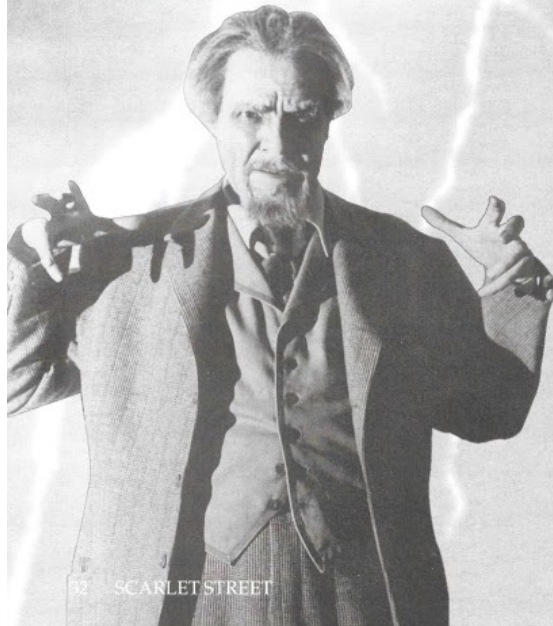


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Whatever reservations one may have about the diminishing participation of the Monster, it is hard to deny that *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* is a vast improvement over its immediate predecessor. True, the film isn't terribly cohesive—it plays like three short films haphazardly strung together. The idea of actually bringing these fiends together isn't really explored, since what Lowe's screenplay manages is a Dracula movie, followed by a Wolf Man movie, followed by a Frankenstein movie. Still, it moves at a much better pace than *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* and isn't as willfully depressing, which is perhaps peculiar in itself, since nearly the entire cast ends up dead before the closing credits. (Can there have ever been a more self-pitying and downright morbid character than Lawrence Talbot in *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN*, with his nonstop mantra of "I only want to die!"? This aspect of the character, while still very much present in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, is somewhat downplayed, at least in part because Talbot isn't the sole focus of the film.)

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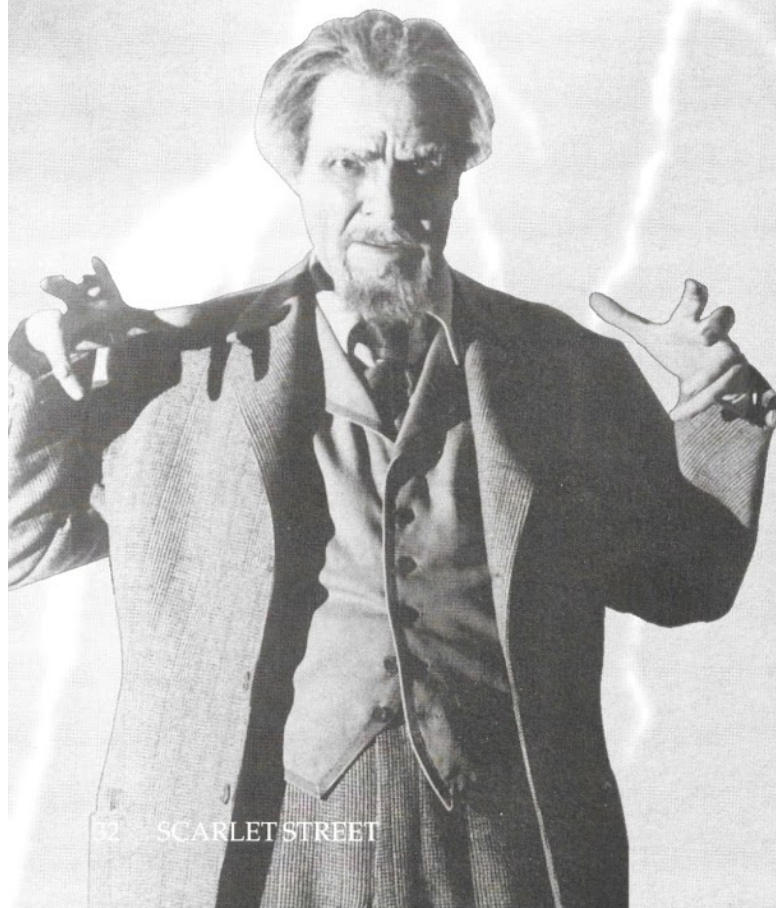
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ALL HOUSE OF DRACULA photos © 1945 Universal Pictures, Inc.

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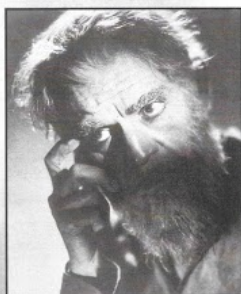
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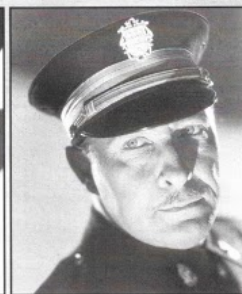




Boris Karloff



Lon Chaney Jr.



Lionel Atwill



John Carradine

ing, easily defeats Chaney's Talbot in the morose self-pity department. Unfortunately, Kenton seems to have favored Naish's performance, awarding him numerous directorial flourishes (especially by tracking in close at key moments) that serve only to make his scenery-chewing even more annoying.

Hans Salter's score begins the film with one of his best main title pieces, only to plummet into absurd overstatement in the picture's first scene (horns blaring to match Karloff's every move as he throttles that nasty, chalk-withholding prison guard) before regaining its composure and settling into more familiar themes. There are occasional outbursts of genuine inspiration (the music in the spectacular ice cavern sequence, for instance, which seems to foreshadow Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Sinfonia Antartica" of a few years later).

Lowe's screenplay may not be Nobel Prize material, but it is certainly better humored than most Siodmak scripts, even while showing little reverence for the studio's frequently convoluted folklore. For some esoteric reason, Lowe decided to insert a new clause in the silver-bullet lore, making it necessary for Talbot to explain that the bullet now has to be fired by "someone who loves him enough to understand." Lowe—or more probably Siodmak, since it was his original story—took a tip from Lew Landers' *THE RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE* (1943) on resuscitating vampires by unstaking them—a John P. Fulton special effect that looks like a refugee from an Invisible Man picture.

The plot follows Niemann and Daniel as they escape from prison (thanks to a cleverly scripted lightning bolt), indulge in a little revenge by getting Dracula to vampirize Niemann's old enemy, Hussman (Sig Ruman), rescue abused gypsy dancer Ilonka (Elena Verdugo), and thaw out the Monster (comatose) and the Wolf Man (conscious) and far from pleased about it—and punishing his rescuers and the viewer with the classically awful entrance speech, "Who are you? Why have you freed me from the ice that imprisoned the beast that lived within me? Why?" Then the whole gang (sans Hussman and the red-integrated Dracula) travels to Niemann's old stomping grounds to revive the Monster and map out a campaign of brain transplants that makes the cerebrum swapping in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* seem like child's play. Roughly, Niemann wants to revenge himself by popping the brain of the Monster into the skull of an old enemy, while transplanting the Wolf Man's brain into yet another former foe just for kicks, and then putting the Monster's brain (which Niemann has apparently forgotten is already slated for another slot) into the Wolf Man for no discernible reason. (In addition to being a mad doctor, Niemann is clearly a frustrated square-dance caller.) Meanwhile, Daniel wants to have his brain put into Talbot's head so that he can compete for Ilonka's romantic favors! To make matters worse, ultimately no brains are ever transplanted, though those of Niemann's enemies do get removed—amusingly, to the same music

that had accompanied the brain transplants in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

Before Niemann's plans can get very far, Ilonka plugs the Wolf Man with a silver bullet and gets killed herself in the bargain, causing the lovesick Daniel to turn on Niemann, while the Monster (roused at long last) saves his benefactor and tosses Daniel out the window (accompanied by Karloff's scream from *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*). The Monster then lumbers off with Niemann under his arm into the convenient quicksand.

It's fun. It's fast-paced. There are several very nice touches—the Dracula sequence, the ice caverns—and some interesting additions to the standard laboratory scenes are standouts. Chaney's first transformation into the Wolf Man is breathtakingly (and economically) handled in a sweeping traveling shot that reveals Kenton at his craftsmanlike best. Nevertheless, the film really is something of a mess structurally and the portrayal of the Monster is so far removed from the original Whale/Karloff version that the connection has become difficult to find.

"Yes, Doctor, I am Count Dracula, but I'm known to the outside world as Baron Latos. You see before you a man who has lived for centuries, kept alive by the blood of innocent people... That's why I've come to you—to seek release against a curse of misery and horror against which I am powerless to fight alone."

—Count Dracula (John Carradine)
HOUSE OF DRACULA

Artistic reservations to one side, *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* proved to be a hit—one of Universal's most successful films for its year—so it stood to reason that there would be a sequel. Also, being Universal, it stood to reason that the sequel would be made as cheaply as possible. After all, it was the "monster rally" concept that sold the picture, not the quality of the picture itself. And so *HOUSE OF DRACULA* became the last serious entry in the studio's Frankenstein saga. Shorn of much in the way of budget (meaning no Karloff, of course) and cursed with at least one absolutely ghastly ultra-economizing notion (reusing the fiery climax from *GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN*), the big surprise is that *HOUSE OF DRACULA* is actually the better of the two films—not in the least because it manages to tell a cohesive story.

Left to his own devices, Edward T. Lowe came up with a story line that actually managed (however improbably, especially as concerns the Monster) to bring all the monsters together—even if he did cheat by not bothering to explain how Dracula and the Wolf Man had come back to life. (In the case of the Wolf Man, perhaps Ilonka really didn't love him enough to understand after all, or maybe she was just a bad shot and only wounded him.) In lieu of Daniel, Lowe fobbed us off with a lady hunchback, who was any-



J. Carrol Naish



George Zucco



Glenn Strange



Sig Ruman

thing but sinister—and a lot less irritating, especially as played by the fetching Jane Adams, who must have been a real trooper, considering the unflattering makeup and the singularly unladylike demise she suffers.

Surprisingly, Lowe also wrote what became the best of Chaney's post-WOLF MAN Larry Talbot performances by subtly reworking the character along the lines of those the actor had been playing in the Inner Sanctum series (an idea reinforced by having him sport his Inner Sanctum mustache and at least one of his natty neckties). Actually, Lowe's story pretty much demanded such a change, since it concerns the idea of Dracula and the Wolf Man coming to the home of altruistic scientist Dr. Franz Edelmann (Onslow Stevens) in search of cures for their respective afflictions. The upshot is a werewolf who seems to have shaken off a good deal of his morbidity—something also necessitated by the fact that Talbot will actually evolve into the film's hero.

Another plus for Lowe's screenplay is its attempt to examine the affliction of vampirism (caused by a blood disease) and lycanthropy (diagnosed as the result of pressure on a part of the brain) in wholly scientific terms, far more rationally and believably than in any previous flirtings with the idea. Coming when it did, it is not too farfetched to suggest that this approach was a reflection of the more "rationally-minded" times into which the world was moving and which, for a time at least, would kill off traditional, supernatural horrors. (Of course, this did not prevent the traditional horrors from getting a little revenge of their own, since, as per the laws governing these matters, Edelmann's scientific jiggery-pokery is his undoing.)

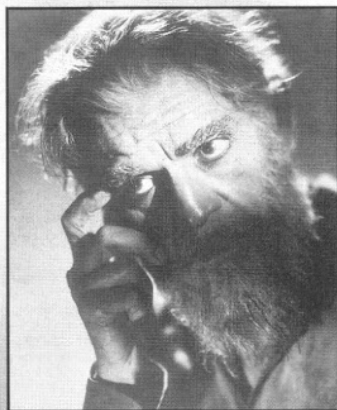
The fact that Talbot is slated to be cured and get the girl (a live one) does pose the problem of significantly reducing his mayhem. After all, even if the audiences would have stood for it, the production code would never have allowed Talbot to live happily ever after following a few ripped-out jugular veins. (Everyone seems to have forgotten about his previous track record in such matters.) Truth to tell, there was another and far more practical reason for limiting Talbot's lycanthropic activity—werewolf hair was in short supply. Jack Pierce's method for creating the Wolf Man involved the generous application of yak hair, something he had not been able to get, owing to World War II. As a result, Chaney was limited to two brief appearances as the Wolf Man—one of which finds

him looking a bit straggly and the other "atmospherically" lit to better disguise his close shave.

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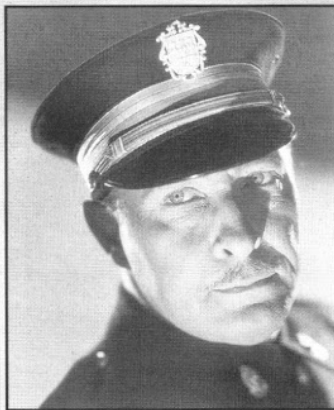




Boris Karloff



Lon Chaney Jr.



Lionel Atwill



John Carradine

ing, easily defeats Chaney's Talbot in the morose self-pity department. Unfortunately, Kenton seems to have favored Naish's performance, awarding him numerous directorial flourishes (especially by tracking in close at key moments) that serve only to make his scenery-chewing even more annoying.

Hans Salter's score begins the film with one of his best main title pieces, only to plummet into absurd overstatement in the picture's first scene (horns blaring to match Karloff's every move as he throttles that nasty, chalk-withholding prison guard) before regaining its composure and settling into more familiar themes. There are occasional outbursts of genuine inspiration (the music in the spectacular ice cavern sequence, for instance, which seems to foreshadow Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Sinfonia Antartica" of a few years later).

Lowe's screenplay may not be Nobel Prize material, but it is certainly better humored than most Siodmak scripts, even while showing little reverence for the studio's frequently convoluted folklore. For some esoteric reason, Lowe decided to insert a new clause in the silver-bullet lore, making it necessary for Talbot to explain that the bullet now has to be fired by "someone who loves him enough to understand." Lowe—or more probably Siodmak, since it was his original story—took a tip from Lew Landers' *THE RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE* (1943) on resuscitating vampires by unstaking them—a John P. Fulton special effect that looks like a refugee from an Invisible Man picture.

The plot follows Niemann and Daniel as they escape from prison (thanks to a cleverly scripted lightning bolt), indulge in a little revenge by getting Dracula to vampirize Niemann's old enemy, Hussman (Sig Ruman), rescue abused gypsy dancer Ilonka (Elena Verdugo), and thaw out the Monster (comatose) and the Wolf Man (conscious and far from pleased about it—and punishing his rescuers and the viewer with the classically awful entrance speech, "Who are you? Why have you freed me from the ice that imprisoned the beast that lived within me? Why?"). Then the whole gang (sans Hussman and the redisintegrated Dracula) travels to Niemann's old stomping grounds to revive the Monster and map out a campaign of brain transplants that makes the cerebrum swapping in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* seem like child's play. Roughly, Niemann wants to revenge himself by popping the brain of the Monster into the skull of an old enemy, while transplanting the Wolf Man's brain into yet another former foe just for kicks, and then putting the Monster's brain (which Niemann has apparently forgotten is already slated for another slot) into the Wolf Man for no discernible reason. (In addition to being a mad doctor, Niemann is clearly a frustrated square-dance caller.) Meanwhile, Daniel wants to have his brain put into Talbot's head so that he can compete for Ilonka's romantic favors! To make matters worse, ultimately no brains are ever transplanted, though those of Niemann's enemies do get removed—amusingly, to the same music

that had accompanied the brain transplants in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

Before Niemann's plans can get very far, Ilonka plugs the Wolf Man with a silver bullet and gets killed herself in the bargain, causing the lovesick Daniel to turn on Niemann, while the Monster (roused at long last) saves his benefactor and tosses Daniel out the window (accompanied by Karloff's scream from *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*). The Monster then lumbers off with Niemann under his arm into the convenient quicksand.

It's fun. It's fast-paced. There are several very nice touches—the Dracula sequence, the ice caverns—and some interesting additions to the standard laboratory scenes are standouts. Chaney's first transformation into the Wolf Man is breathtakingly (and economically) handled in a sweeping traveling shot that reveals Kenton at his craftsmanlike best. Nevertheless, the film really is something of a mess structurally and the portrayal of the Monster is so far removed from the original Whale/Karloff version that the connection has become difficult to find.

"Yes, Doctor, I am Count Dracula, but I'm known to the outside world as Baron Latos. You see before you a man who has lived for centuries, kept alive by the blood of innocent people . . . That's why I've come to you—to seek release against a curse of misery and horror against which I am powerless to fight alone."

—Count Dracula (John Carradine)
HOUSE OF DRACULA

Artistic reservations to one side, *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* proved to be a hit—one of Universal's most successful films for its year—so it stood to reason that there would be a sequel. Also, being Universal, it stood to reason that the sequel would be made as cheaply as possible. After all, it was the "monster rally" concept that sold the picture, not the quality of the picture itself. And so *HOUSE OF DRACULA* became the last serious entry in the studio's Frankenstein saga. Shorn of much in the way of budget (meaning no Karloff, of course) and cursed with at least one absolutely ghastly ultra-economizing notion (reusing the fiery climax from *GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN*), the big surprise is that *HOUSE OF DRACULA* is actually the better of the two films—not in the least because it manages to tell a cohesive story.

Left to his own devices, Edward T. Lowe came up with a story line that actually managed (however improbably, especially as concerns the Monster) to bring all the monsters together—even if he did cheat by not bothering to explain how Dracula and the Wolf Man had come back to life. (In the case of the Wolf Man, perhaps Ilonka really didn't love him enough to understand after all, or maybe she was just a bad shot and only wounded him.) In lieu of Daniel, Lowe fobbed us off with a lady hunchback, who was any-



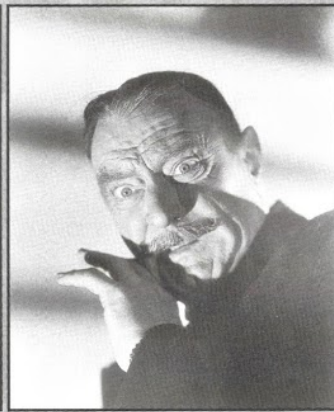
J. Carrol Naish



George Zucco



Glenn Strange



Sig Ruman

thing but sinister—and a lot less irritating, especially as played by the fetching Jane Adams, who must have been a real trooper, considering the unflattering makeup and the singularly unladylike demise she suffers.

Surprisingly, Lowe also wrote what became the best of Chaney's post-WOLF MAN Larry Talbot performances by subtly reworking the character along the lines of those the actor had been playing in the Inner Sanctum series (an idea reinforced by having him sport his Inner Sanctum mustache and at least one of his natty neckties). Actually, Lowe's story pretty much demanded such a change, since it concerns the idea of Dracula and the Wolf Man coming to the home of altruistic scientist Dr. Franz Edelmann (Onslow Stevens) in search of cures for their respective afflictions. The upshot is a werewolf who seems to have shaken off a good deal of his morbidity—something also necessitated by the fact that Talbot will actually evolve into the film's hero.

Another plus for Lowe's screenplay is its attempt to examine the affliction of vampirism (caused by a blood disease) and lycanthropy (diagnosed as the result of pressure on a part of the brain) in wholly scientific terms, far more rationally and believably than in any previous flirtings with the idea. Coming when it did, it is not too farfetched to suggest that this approach was a reflection of the more "rationally-minded" times into which the world was moving and which, for a time at least, would kill off traditional, supernatural horrors. (Of course, this did not prevent the traditional horrors from getting a little revenge of their own, since, as per the laws governing these matters, Edelmann's scientific jiggery-pokery is his undoing.)

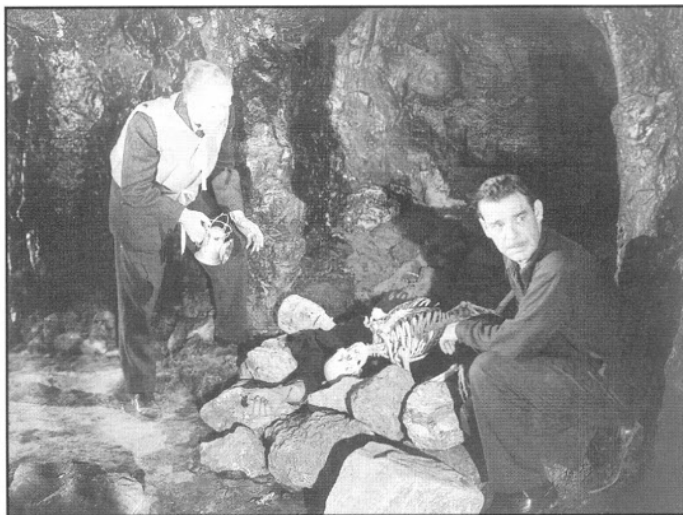
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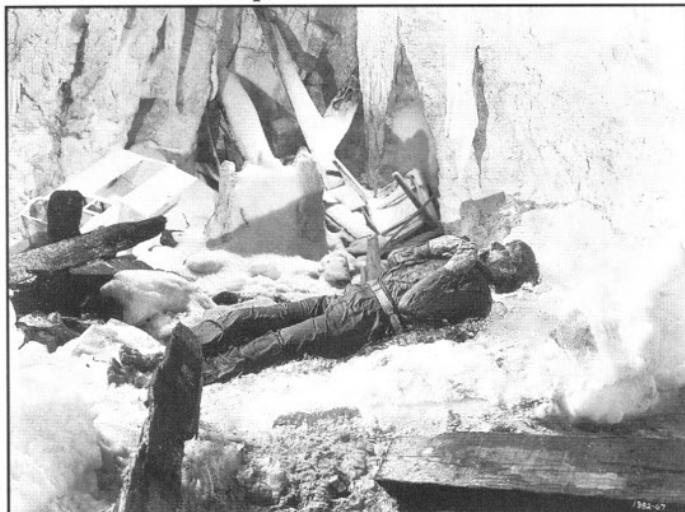
LEFT: Returning home from a visit to the Chamber of Horrors, Carl Hussman (Peter Coe), Rita Hussman (Anne Gwynne), Burgomaster Hussman (Sig Ruman), and Inspector Arnz (Lionel Atwill) pause as they hear the approach of Count Dracula's carriage in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. **RIGHT:** Dr. Edelmann (Onslow Stevens) and Larry Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.) find the Frankenstein Monster (Glenn Strange) and the skeleton of the mad Dr. Niemann in a cave beneath the *HOUSE OF DRACULA*.

Stuart's newspaper-reporter suitor in 1933's *SECRET OF THE BLUE ROOM*.) From a box-office standpoint, Stevens was hardly a major asset, but from an artistic one, there could have been no better choice. His performance literally holds the film together, especially in the latter portions when, after Dracula is destroyed and Talbot is well on his way to a cure, he takes over as the chief menace.

The character of Dr. Franz Edelmann is actually one of the most interesting additions to the Universal stable in the forties, created with an unusual degree of complexity, especially in a series that often seemed to have degenerated into simplemindedness. In many respects, Edelmann is a throwback to the type of character one finds in the Universal horrors of the thirties, and is perhaps best approached in terms of Henry Hull's Dr. Wilfrid Glendon in *WEREWOLF OF LONDON* (1935). Stevens' transformation from

beneficent physician to medical crackpot is handled in much the same way as Hull's transformation, though it culminates in a manner that recalls director Kenton's penchant for borrowing from Mamoulian's *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* (1932). Stevens' portrayal is certainly reminiscent (albeit more human) of Hull's—an intellectual man caught up in forces he can neither control, nor even comfortably admit exist. His is the dilemma of a rational human being trying to apply his rationalism to an irrational situation. Stevens gets every drop of juice out of the role, beautifully underplaying all his straight scenes, yet pulling out all the stops in his mad scenes after his blood has been contaminated with that of Dracula, turning him into a kind of vampiric Jekyll and Hyde. It's a delight when anyone can deliver such an enjoyably melodramatic line as "In trying to perform the miracle of medical science, I've failed—my

LEFT: The Wolf Man (Lon Chaney Jr.) returns to life once again in the ice cavern beneath the ruins of Dr. Frankenstein's castle in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Mind you, the castle above isn't the titular abode, since nobody spends very much time there. Besides, the castle didn't even start out as a castle—it was a sanatorium on flat ground in *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1942), became a burnt-out castle on a mountainside in *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943), and a ruined castle on a mountainside in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Furthermore, the joint was in the village of Vasaria in *GHOST* and *MEETS* and in the village of Frankenstein in *HOUSE*. And that's not all, folks—the Wolf Man and friends later travel to another house, located in *Visaria*. One movie later, the entire village of Visaria picks up and moves from the mountains to the sea shore. No wonder nobody had trouble believing a guy could turn into a wolf! **RIGHT:** Frankenstein's Monster is brought back to life by crazed Dr. Edelmann in an effective *HOUSE OF DRACULA* dream sequence.



blood has been contaminated by the blood of Dracula, my soul and mind have been seized by some nameless horror, a lust that changes me into the thing that killed Siegfried tonight," with the degree of conviction managed by Stevens.

The air of the old Universals hangs heavy over *HOUSE OF DRACULA*—and for the better. Not only is Dr. Edelmann similar to Dr. Glendon, but one of the film's most memorable and effective scenes—Dracula exerting a hypnotic influence over Miliza as she plays Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata—leans heavily on a similar scene involving a Chopin nocturne in Lambert Hillyer's *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER* (1936). (Intriguingly, just a year before *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, a very similar scene appeared in Paramount's ghost story, *THE UNINVITED*. There, the sudden presence of an unfriendly spirit caused Ray Milland's composing/playing of "Stella by Starlight" to take on sinister, ominous tones.)

The harkening back to older films imparts a degree of gravity to *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, a stronger sense of conviction than is found in the Universal horrors that surround it—a blessed and even essential commodity for a film that asks us to accept the idea that the late Dr. Niemann and the Frankenstein Monster just happened to float on an underground river of quicksand to land smack under Edelmann's castle! (Then again, Kharis the Mummy made it all the way from Massachusetts to Louisiana in much the same manner.) Glenn Strange told Don Glut about his afternoon in a mud puddle in *The Frankenstein Legend* (Scarecrow, 1973):

"... I was in there all day long and that stuff was cold! Chaney came down with a fifth and I think I got most of it. He poured it down me and it warmed me up some. They finished shooting and I went up to the dressing room. Of course they had a nice fire up there. They took the makeup off and by the time I got about half undressed I was so looped I could hardly get up...."

DRACULA's tight household budget is undeniable and sometimes painfully obvious. When we open with Frank Skinner's SON OF FRANKENSTEIN theme, we know what's coming. All, or very nearly all of the film's music is recycled from compositions for earlier, more elaborate productions. Sets, too, are often of the recycled variety, and stock footage is as self-evident as wallpaper. The sometimes painful insertions are distracting. In the case of lifting the entire climax from *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (even though Kenton was using footage from one of his own films), it's downright ludicrous, since it affords the improbable spectacle of Chaney (as Talbot) trying to get away from himself (as the Monster)! However, at least one use of stock footage seems less a case of convenience than one of conviction. Once Edelmann transforms into his evil other half, he has a vision in which he sees himself reviving the Frankenstein Monster and using the creature to wreak havoc on humanity. Much of this splendid montage (which contains some of the best filmmaking in *HOUSE OF DRACULA*) is unique to the film, but towards the end pieces from *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* find their way into the mix. Some of these seem no more than arbitrary padding to goose the sequence a little, but the final clip is that of the Monster toppling the religious statue in the graveyard—an image that particularly distresses the human side of

Edelmann, which the film has carefully and deliberately built up not only as good, but religious. Nothing that Kenton and company could have shot would have better conveyed the total transformation of Edelmann into a force of evil. It is a brilliant case of effectively utilizing the materials at hand.

The worst aspect of *HOUSE OF DRACULA* is that it repeats the *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* formula regarding the Monster. Poor Glenn Strange spends the bulk of his screen time lying around (first in quicksand and then on the requisite operating table). Again, no sooner is the Monster revived than he stumbles and bumbles his way into bringing about his own immediate destruction. Indeed, the poor

fellow gets very nearly more action in Edelmann's fantasy than he does in reality. Fortunately, the scene in which Edelmann brings the Monster back to mobility is itself a good one, with Stevens in fine form as the utterly 'round the bend vampiric scientist. "You shouldn't have done that, Nina," he tells the hapless hunchback who interrupts him, adding, "I don't like people who see what they're not supposed to see," just before unceremoniously strangling her and dropping her through a trap door into the dungeon below. A similar approach on the former Wolf Man ("Well, Mr. Talbot, you broke your promise to me, didn't you? You told the police. I don't like people who break their promises, Mr. Talbot.") fares less happily for our deranged medico, since Talbot, having just witnessed Edelmann bring about three deaths, is less inclined than Nina to give his benefactor the benefit of the

doubt and shoots him. It is this action that prompts the Monster to run amok—or more correctly, stagger amok—bringing about the decidedly no-frills conflagration that climaxes the film.

Shortcomings to one side, though, *HOUSE OF DRACULA* is far from a disgraceful farewell to Universal's Frankenstein saga. Its plusses outweigh both its own minuses and the plusses of its immediate predecessor.

There are a number of excellent sequences in the film, including the splendid one in which Edelmann (in his nefarious mode) hitches a ride into town on Siegfried's wagon, inhospitably offing said gentleman in the bargain. The chase scene that follows his murderous joyride is similarly well done, even if Kenton falls back on his favorite—and most effective—Mamoulion borrowing, of receding figures casting ever larger shadows on the walls behind them. ("I, Kenton, took it... pardon me, borrowed it from the last reel of DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE!") Kenton, in fact, makes very good use of shadows throughout the latter sections of the film, especially in scenes featuring Edelmann, whose invariably deformed shadow adds greatly to his menace. And, of course, there is the usual delight of such Universal contract players as Lionel Atwill (in a smallish Krogh-like capacity, possibly due to his failing health), Ludwig Stossel, and, of course, Skelton ("Dr. Edelmann killed my brudder") Knaggs as the town malcontent and resident grotesque. All in all, it makes for a finale that is far more satisfying than not.



Ken Hanke is the author of *Tim Burton: An Unauthorized Biography of the Filmmaker* (Renaissance Books, 1999)

House Call ELENA VERDUGO

interviewed by
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Recently, the still-vivacious Elena met with *Scarlet Street* to discuss her career and, in particular, her visit to the *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* . . .

Scarlet Street: We certainly intend to ask you all about *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, but we want to ask you about your other movies as well.

Elena Verdugo: Wonderful! Some of them are good, some of them we don't talk about. (Laughs) No, really, I'll even tell you when they were rotten. That doesn't bother me.

SS: How did you get started in films?

EV: Well, I was a product of the community and everybody went into films, didn't they? Never occurred to me not to, because I was a dancer; I was trained. They started me when I was about three, and it was as a Spanish character dancer—some Mexican, some Spanish, some Portuguese, a little of everything. I danced and I danced often. Whenever there was a call for a Spanish dancer—well, that's how I got into *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY*.

SS: Would you have preferred to remain in musicals?

EV: I would have been more comfortable, wouldn't I? But I didn't have the Betty Grable look. I was short and kind of round. I'm very short! Shorter now than I was then! (Laughs) I was never petite. I always had muscles; I was a young athlete! I had a very young, naive look, too. Well, I had lived a naive, quiet life. I lived with my parents in a house with a Latin background. I never went to public schools. I was signed by Fox at 15. There was this talent scout, Lola Moore, very famous for children. She said, "They need a Spanish dancer in *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY*." She set up the interview, which was a dance audition. No producers. Just the dance directors. Nick Castle was the choreographer and my aunt started playing the piano and I was well prepared, very prepared at 15. I knew what I was doing. I was physically just perfect and strong and, by the time I was through with my interview, Nick Castle was calling people and saying, "You're going to have to come down and see this girl!"

SS: *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY* was a gigantic hit.

EV: I had my first big scene with J. Carrol Naish; he was on the set that day! They touched up my face and next thing I know I was in front of the camera. Betty Grable was really cute on the drive back from location. She'd just finished *DUBARRY WAS A LADY* in New York and she said, "I don't know if I want to stay in movies now that I've done Broadway." But she was neat; she was just one of the girls. I remember she put on her own makeup. She never had anyone else do it. She used very little.

SS: Here's a title they probably don't ask you about at horror conventions: the Paramount musical *RAINBOW ISLAND*.

EV: Oh, my dear, that has a very sad story. I was signed by Paramount after *THE MOON AND SIXPENCE*. I was very hot. I was at Fox, but they dropped my option and I was signed by Paramount because of Cecil B. DeMille, who wanted me to do *THE STORY OF DR. WASSELL*.

with Gary Cooper. Well, two weeks before production, they decided I wouldn't do it. My agent was shocked, the newspapers were shocked, everybody was shocked! Paramount said I looked too "virginal," and the character was supposed to be having this love affair with Gary Cooper. I was 16 and had led a very sheltered life. It shows, you know? I didn't come from the Copa! (Laughs) It's dumb, but that's the way Latin people are! The girl doesn't get out of the house.

SS: So, instead of *DR. WASSELL* . . .

EV: So, I was waiting out my contract, and *RAINBOW ISLAND* came along. I went from almost costarring with Gary Cooper to being one of those sarong girls



The Wolf Man (Lon Chaney Jr.) has murdered Ilonka (Elena Verdugo) in the back yard of the *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944), but what this publicity still does not reveal is that she has also killed him—thanks to a silver bullet.

in *RAINBOW ISLAND*. I was not happy—although I met some great guys! Ironically, through *RAINBOW ISLAND* I got my starring TV series, *MEET MILLIE*. Eddie Bracken was in *RAINBOW ISLAND*, and when he was doing the pilot for his show, I played opposite him and we really did a good pilot. When *MILLIE* came up, they knew my work from Eddie's pilot and I got the part. So everything sort of ties in, doesn't it?

SS: Not only were you a sarong girl in *RAINBOW ISLAND*, you were a sarong girl along with sarong queen Dorothy Lamour.

EV: Oh, she was terrific! Otherwise, I wasn't treated very well. On *MOON AND SIXPENCE*, I was a star. The problem with being one of the sarong girls—the director treats you differently. I just didn't like it. I had a line and the director, who didn't know anything about me, said, "Speak up or I'll give this line to somebody else!" I thought, "Do it!" (Laughs) But I didn't say anything. *RAIN-*

BOW ISLAND is not what I should have had following *MOON AND SIXPENCE*.

SS: And costarring with George Sanders.

EV: That was an experience! He was always asleep. You could go to a corner and there he'd be—sound asleep! (Laughs) There was a false head that they kept my wig on, and he drew my face on it, my eyes, my nose . . . he knew he was dealing with a child. I knew I was with someone very special! He was not unlike the part, really. He was charming.

SS: Your next film after *RAINBOW ISLAND* was for Universal: *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Did you sign a contract with them?

EV: No, I was not a Universal contract girl, even though I actually did more pictures for them than some of their contract people.

SS: You weren't too happy with *RAINBOW ISLAND*, so what did you think when you were offered *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*?

EV: I was bewildered! (Laughs) I had never known anything about horror pictures, not being my thing, and I was still ready to do *TIN PAN ALLEY* or something with Betty Grable. I was bewildered and I was so shy; it was my first picture without my mother on the set. I was so shy that I wouldn't even go into the commissary. I'd just go off someplace, buy a candy bar, and go into my little dressing room. I could not communicate; I was still just a child inside, but dealing with this adult world and it was difficult. When I was working it was easy, because I could just be the character.

SS: Did it help to have J. Carrol Naish there? You had worked together previously.

EV: Yes, yes, yes! It was very familiar and nice and wonderful. And that's why I liked Lon Chaney Jr., too. I always speak very highly of Lon Chaney Jr. He recognized what I was going through and he was so kind to me! He was charming. I remember once, he was having a beer and sitting on the back of a truck. He asked me if I wanted a Coke and I said, "Yeah, I'd love it!" So I jumped up on the truck with him and we sat there in costume,

our legs dangling. I remember the publicity department saw us and took some stills, but we were having a fine old time on our own. I wasn't shy around him; I was fine.

SS: Some of Chaney's other costars thought he was pretty gruff.

EV: He was very tender with me, very nice. Well, if he was going to take it out on somebody, he wasn't going to take it out on a young teenage girl!

SS: Was it easier to play your love scenes together because you liked Lon Chaney so much personally?

EV: Oh, yes! It would have been difficult if he had been . . . well, no, it wouldn't, because once they say "action" you just do what you have to do! (Laughs)

SS: Have you a favorite scene in the film?

EV: Oh, working with J. Carrol on that night, that blistering night with the wind—I think that was the best scene for me. It's when I first notice his hump. I was in glorious heaven! All the attention

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Scarlet Street: We certainly intend to ask you all about *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, but we want to ask you about your other movies as well.

Elena Verdugo: Wonderful! Some of them are good, some of them we don't talk about. (Laughs) No, really, I'll even tell you when they were rotten. That doesn't bother me.

SS: How did you get started in films?

EV: Well, I was a product of the community and everybody went into films, didn't they? Never occurred to me not to, because I was a dancer; I was trained. They started me when I was about three, and it was as a Spanish character dancer—some Mexican, some Spanish, some Portuguese, a little of everything. I danced and I danced often. Whenever there was a call for a Spanish dancer—well, that's how I got into *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY*.

SS: Would you have preferred to remain in musicals?

EV: I would have been more comfortable, wouldn't I? But I didn't have the Betty Grable look. I was short and kind of round. I'm very short! Shorter now than I was then! (Laughs) I was never petite. I always had muscles; I was a young athlete! I had a very young, naive look, too. Well, I had lived a naive, quiet life. I lived with my parents in a house with a Latin background. I never went to public schools. I was signed by Fox at 15. There was this talent scout, Lola Moore, very famous for children. She said, "They need a Spanish dancer in *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY*." She set up the interview, which was a dance audition. No producers. Just the dance directors. Nick Castle was the choreographer and my aunt started playing the piano and I was well prepared, very prepared at 15. I knew what I was doing. I was physically just perfect and strong and, by the time I was through with my interview, Nick Castle was calling people and saying, "You're going to have to come down and see this girl!"

SS: *DOWN ARGENTINE WAY* was a gigantic hit.

EV: I had my first big scene with J. Carroll Naish; he was on the set that day! They touched up my face and next thing I know I was in front of the camera. Betty Grable was really cute on the drive back from location. She'd just finished *DUBARRY WAS A LADY* in New York and she said, "I don't know if I want to stay in movies now that I've done Broadway." But she was neat; she was just one of the girls. I remember she put on her own makeup. She never had anyone else do it. She used very little.

SS: Here's a title they probably don't ask you about at horror conventions: the Paramount musical *RAINBOW ISLAND*.

EV: Oh, my dear, that has a very sad story. I was signed by Paramount after *THE MOON AND SIXPENCE*. I was very hot. I was at Fox, but they dropped my option and I was signed by Paramount because of Cecil B. DeMille, who wanted me to do *THE STORY OF DR. WASELL*

with Gary Cooper. Well, two weeks before production, they decided I wouldn't do it. My agent was shocked, the newspapers were shocked, everybody was shocked! Paramount said I looked too "virginal," and the character was supposed to be having this love affair with Gary Cooper. I was 16 and had led a very sheltered life. It shows, you know? I didn't come from the Copa! (Laughs) It's dumb, but that's the way Latin people are! The girl doesn't get out of the house.

SS: So, instead of *DR. WASELL*...

EV: So, I was waiting out my contract, and *RAINBOW ISLAND* came along. I went from almost costarring with Gary Cooper to being one of those sarong girls



The Wolf Man (Lon Chaney Jr.) has murdered Ilonka (Elena Verdugo) in the back yard of the *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944), but what this publicity still does not reveal is that she has also killed him—thanks to a silver bullet.

in *RAINBOW ISLAND*. I was not happy—although I met some great guys! Ironically, through *RAINBOW ISLAND* I got my starring TV series, *MEET MILLIE*. Eddie Bracken was in *RAINBOW ISLAND*, and when he was doing the pilot for his show, I played opposite him and we really did a good pilot. When *MILLIE* came up, they knew my work from Eddie's pilot and I got the part. So everything sort of ties in, doesn't it?

SS: Not only were you a sarong girl in *RAINBOW ISLAND*, you were a sarong girl along with sarong queen Dorothy Lamour.

EV: Oh, she was terrific! Otherwise, I wasn't treated very well. On *MOON AND SIXPENCE*, I was a star. The problem with being one of the sarong girls—the director treats you differently. I just didn't like it. I had a line and the director, who didn't know anything about me, said, "Speak up or I'll give this line to somebody else!" I thought, "Do it!" (Laughs) But I didn't say anything. *RAIN-*

BOW ISLAND is not what I should have had following *MOON AND SIXPENCE*.

SS: And costarring with George Sanders.

EV: That was an experience! He was always asleep. You could go to a corner and there he'd be—sound asleep! (Laughs) There was a false head that they kept my wig on, and he drew my face on it, my eyes, my nose... he knew he was dealing with a child. I knew I was with someone very special! He was not unlike the part, really. He was charming.

SS: Your next film after *RAINBOW ISLAND* was for Universal: *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Did you sign a contract with them?

EV: No, I was not a Universal contract girl, even though I actually did more pictures for them than some of their contract people.

SS: You weren't too happy with *RAINBOW ISLAND*, so what did you think when you were offered *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*?

EV: I was bewildered! (Laughs) I had never known anything about horror pictures, not being my thing, and I was still ready to do *TIN PAN ALLEY* or something with Betty Grable. I was bewildered and I was so shy; it was my first picture without my mother on the set. I was so shy that I wouldn't even go into the commissary. I'd just go off someplace, buy a candy bar, and go into my little dressing room. I could not communicate; I was still just a child inside, but dealing with this adult world and it was difficult. When I was working it was easy, because I could just be the character.

SS: Did it help to have J. Carroll Naish there? You had worked together previously.

EV: Yes, yes, yes! It was very familiar and nice and wonderful. And that's why I liked Lon Chaney Jr., too. I always speak very highly of Lon Chaney Jr. He recognized what I was going through and he was so kind to me! He was charming. I remember once, he was having a beer and sitting on the back of a truck. He asked me if I wanted a Coke and I said, "Yeah, I'd love it!" So I jumped up on the truck with him and we sat there in costume, our legs dangling. I remember the publicity department saw us and took some stills, but we were having a fine old time on our own. I wasn't shy around him; I was fine.

SS: Some of Chaney's other costars thought he was pretty gruff.

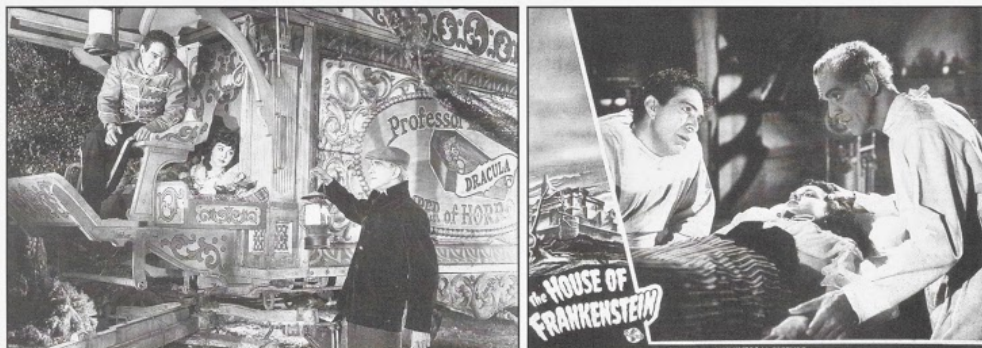
EV: He was very tender with me, very nice. Well, if he was going to take it out on somebody, he wasn't going to take it out on a young teenage girl!

SS: Was it easier to play your love scenes together because you liked Lon Chaney so much personally?

EV: Oh, yes! It would have been difficult if he had been... well, no, it wouldn't, because once they say "action" you just do what you have to do! (Laughs)

SS: Have you a favorite scene in the film?

EV: Oh, working with J. Carroll on that night, that blistering night with the wind—I think that was the best scene for me. It's when I first notice his hump. I was in glorious heaven! All the attention



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SS: In the film, that's your first scene with Boris Karloff.

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any attention to anyone because everything was being lit. And when we did it, we just did it! You know, in those days they referred to any girl under 21 as jail bait. So people watched themselves. It took a certain kind of fellow to really feel free with a young girl, and most of these men were quite a bit older than me. I'd love to have known Karloff better, but I really had nothing to say to him. I felt more comfortable with J. Carrol, and the same with Lon Chaney.

SS: What about Glenn Strange, who played the Monster?

EV: He was an easygoing fellow. If he wasn't playing the Monster, he was doing Westerns. He was just an actor, another guy who was a utility actor at Universal. But he was fun, really. Glenn was always making fun of himself, and having fun! The man who did all the monster make-ups, Jack Pierce—he was charming and he took me all around the set; he showed me everything. And I'm still in touch with Helen Durego, who did the hair on

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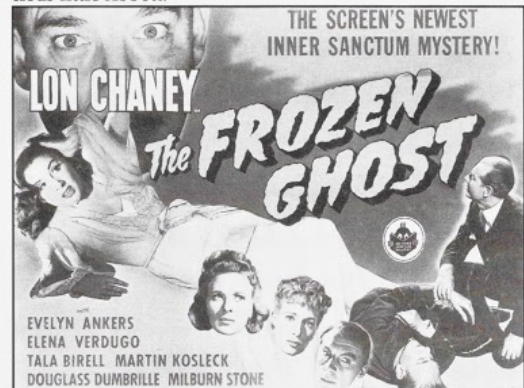
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SS: Why have these become cult films?

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SS: After *FROZEN GHOST*, you starred with Abbott and Costello on *LITTLE GIANT*.

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SS: It's one of the two films they made back to back in which Bud Abbott and Lou Costello didn't really work as a team.

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EV: Bud was kind of a gruff fellow; he had kind of a gruff voice, I mean. We didn't have much to do together and, honestly, I don't remember saying a word to him. But I loved little Mary Gordon, and Lou was adorable, acting shy as the country boy. I thought he was good!

SS: Mary Gordon was at Universal playing Mrs. Hudson in the Sherlock Holmes films.

EV: She was the cutest thing ever! And she knew it! (Laughs) Adorable, dear little woman!

SS: You appeared in *THE SONG OF SCHEHERAZADE* in 1947.

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EV: Yes, what was she doing? (Laughs)

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EV: You know, Roland Winters played Charlie Chan and he ended up doing a part on MEET MILLIE. He played the boss, Mr. Boone. We did MEET MILLIE at CBS from 1952 to 1956. I have no film of it; it was live. Well, I have three episodes and they burned the rest! Four and a half years!

SS: At that point, most sitcoms were being filmed. It's surprising that you were still doing it live.

EV: Oh, well, our producer thought we'd lose the quality if we put it on film. What we lost was a million dollars! (Laughs) That was another bad decision, and it wasn't mine!

SS: Back then a series had 39 episodes a season, didn't it?

EV: Oh, yes! We worked all the time! When it went off, I was tired but I was trained! (Laughs) But then I didn't have as much activity. I did a lot of series, but I didn't star in any. Then I costarred with Juliet Prowse in MONA MCCLUSKEY. I liked that one! George Burns was the producer and I had some fun with that part. She was kind of a Bea, the kind of part that Bea Benaderet would have played, the blonde sidekick.

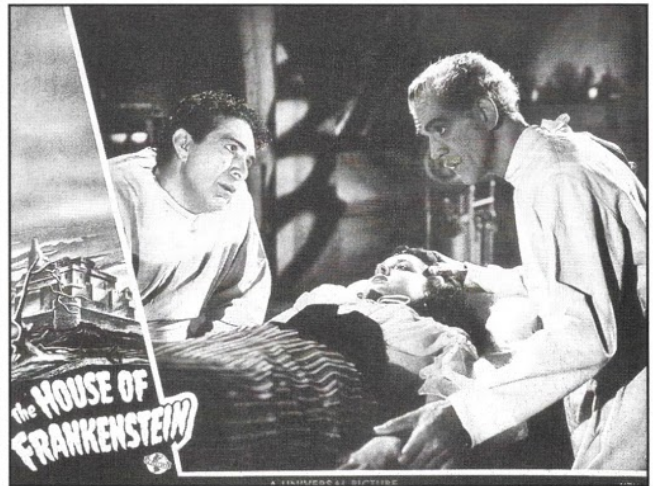
SS: Was it difficult to find work or were there other problems?

EV: Well, it was a bad cycle. Mother was very ill. She died in '59 and I had that on my mind, and I was raising my son and I was divorced. It was very sad. It was just a bad cycle. They didn't know what to do with me, but then nobody's ever known what to do with me! I go through one success and then nothing happens and I've

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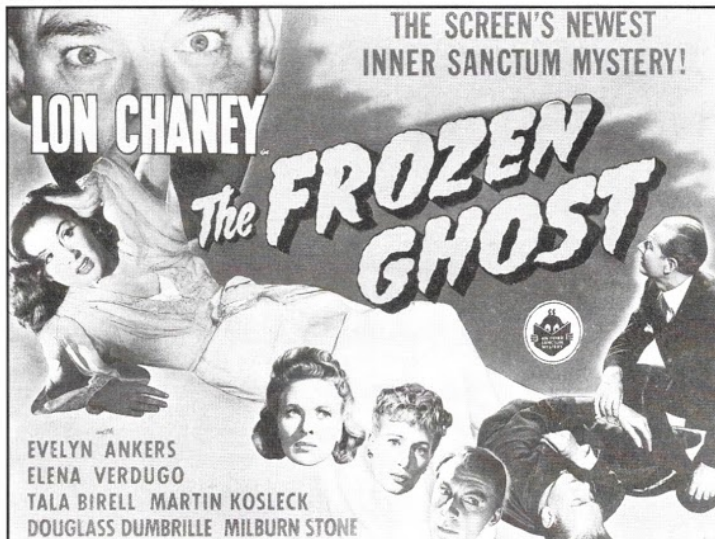
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EV: What's not to enjoy when you're working with top people? Robert Young was tops! And I was blessed with a makeup artist man who I loved, oh, so much. He just died and I miss him so much. His love was so strong and he was so compassionate. We'd go over my lines and we'd giggle and laugh. He called me Miss Verduga. "Now, Miss Verduga, it's time to go!" "I'm not ready." "We must go, now, and do our work." He was gentle and kind with me and I loved it. Wonderful man!

SS: Looking back over your career, what are the high points for you?

EV: You know, I'm always surprised that there are people who are fans! I get these letters and they say I've given them so many hours of entertainment and they say, "Thank you." I think, "Thank me?" I just went in and did it! I was always swimming upstream. It was never easy; my career was never easy for me. But I

didn't care whether I was working on a cheap film or a big film, or doing a couple of days on television when television first started. I didn't care; I was having a good time! I didn't take myself very seriously. Whenever I started taking myself seriously, all of a sudden my career would crash and I'd say, "Well, somebody's got to be at fault here!" Then I'd scream and yell and change agents and start all over again. I can't say that it was easy, but I was sure blessed with the amount of work I got. I never went to the Actors Studio or the Actors Lab. I should have, but I had a son to raise and my mother to take care of and . . . I can't say I was ever a terrific actor. I had moments that were okay.

SS: Like your big scene in HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN? That's really beautifully played.

EV: That was good, wasn't it; all eyes on me! (Laughs) I have a friend, Marvin Kap-

lan, who would get so angry with me when I'd say, "I just haven't got it!" He'd say, "Leni, you're natural! You're a natural talent! You're gorgeous!"

SS: And remember, you still have all those fans writing letters and wanting to meet you at conventions.

EV: Yes, I can't believe it!

SS: You were making movies to entertain people, so obviously you've succeeded!

EV: Isn't that nice! The fans are unbelievable! And I'm married to a wonderful man, a great man! My son is a director on EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND, and his wife Ruth did voice work for DR. QUINN, MEDICINE WOMAN. She's a wonderful actress, wonderful! I mean, the whole family is talented!

SS: Well, then, it seems you've established a dynasty. You'll be ready to take back California.

EV: Oh, we're ready! (Laughs)

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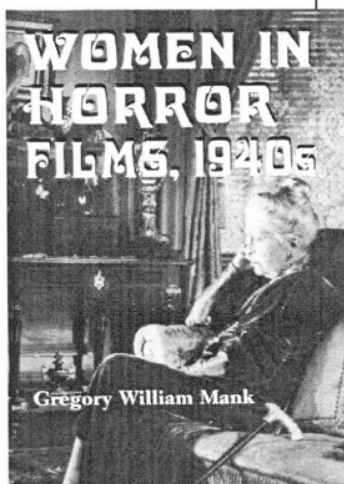
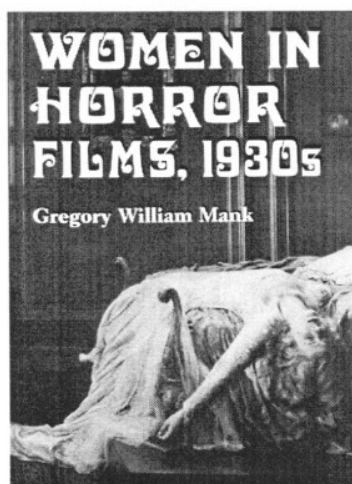
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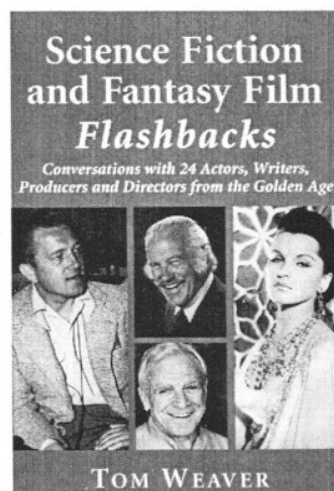
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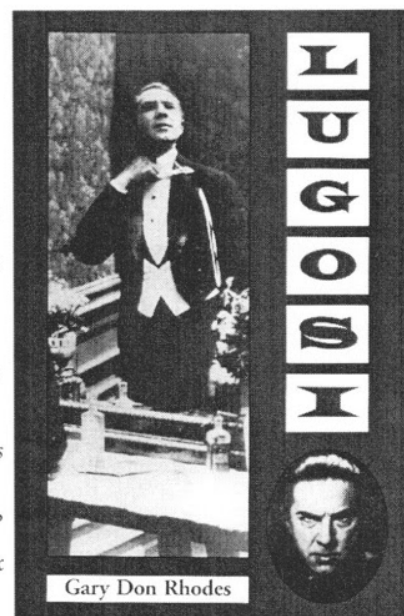
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House Call JANE ADAMS

interviewed by
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For decades, now, there has been an ongoing debate among horror fans and critics alike as to which of the two Universal horror films, *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944) or *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945), ranks the higher. With each side citing the varying highs and lows of both pictures, the debate is likely to continue—indefinitely.

Nevertheless, when it comes to actress Jane Adams, who played Nina, the pitiable but prudent hunch-backed nurse in *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, there's little doubt in her mind as to which of the two films surpasses the other. Today, over half a century after its release, she continues to look upon *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, her costars, and her character of Nina with the reverence, respect, and zeal that one would expect to find among the film's many fans. Yet, her appreciation goes a few steps further,

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Recently, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Jane, during which time we touched on the various milestones of her diversified, but all-too-brief, film career—which includes roles in *SALOME, WHERE SHE DANCED* (1945), *LADY ON A TRAIN* (1945), *THIS LOVE OF OURS* (1945), *A NIGHT IN PARADISE* (1945), *THE BRUTE MAN* (1946), *HE WALKED BY NIGHT* (1948), *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1949), *ANGELS IN DISGUISE* (1949), *MASTER MINDS* (1949), *GIRL FROM SAN LORENZO* (1950), *SECRET OF OUTLAW FLATS* (1953), and more. Although she fervently embraces all the fond memories she has of these and other pictures, it's pretty easy to see which one ranks the higher....

Scarlet Street: It's a little known fact that, before you became Jane Adams, your real name was actually Betty Jane Bierce, and that Ambrose Bierce, the well-known American journalist and short-story writer, was a distant cousin of yours.

Jane Adams: Yes, that's right.

SS: His death remains a mystery, doesn't it? Isn't there some question as to whether or not he was killed in Mexico?

JA: Yes, that's true. You've done your homework, I see. Yes, it's still a mystery. He was of the same era and knew many of the founders of the Bohemian Club. Henry Huntington, who started the big railroads of this country, was one—and there were several others involved.

SS: Do you have any mementos that belonged to Ambrose?

JA: I do, as a matter of fact. I have an autographed etching of his.

SS: Ambrose was born in Ohio, but you were born in San Antonio, Texas.

JA: I left San Antonio at the age of two, when we moved to Los Angeles—Hollywood, actually. My father and mother were originally from Illinois and they kept looking for a better climate because my father's health wasn't too good. They had gone to other places—St. Louis and some areas in Florida and so forth—and then San Antonio before finally deciding to try California. They loved it and lived the rest of their lives here.

SS: Do you have any brothers or sisters, Jane?

JA: Yes. I had an older sister, but she passed away when I was 10 years old.

SS: Before going into acting, didn't you originally study music?

JA: Yes, I started studying the violin when I was very young. Later on, when I entered high school, I became the concert mistress of the Los Angeles All-Cities High School Orchestra. At that time, this involved 52 different high schools and I was the concert mistress—first chair. My high-school teacher became the head of music in the Los Angeles City Schools and he was able to arrange a Juilliard scholarship for me—as well as a scholarship to USC. So, I had a musical career ahead of me. But, I didn't take advantage of either opportunity.

SS: Why?

JA: Well, although I adore music, I just decided that I didn't want to play in an

orchestra all my life—and I didn't want to concertize. It made me very nervous and I felt it just wasn't the right thing for me. But, I'd always participated in Shakespearean contests in L.A. I'd had an elocution teacher when I was quite young, so I could go either way. I finally went to the Pasadena Playhouse and read scenes for them and was able to get a partial scholarship.

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SS: What do you remember most about *SALOME, WHERE SHE DANCED*?

JA: My experience with Yvonne De Carlo—and, for that matter, with most all the people I worked with at Universal—was that they were quite serious about their work. No fooling around. Maybe it was just the trend over there. They would go to the set and do what they had to do and then they'd leave. I didn't socialize very much, either, because I was living with a couple, a banker and his wife, and was still quite young.

SS: Soon after this, you starred as Dorothy in 1945's *TRAIL TO VENGEANCE*, the first of a handful of Universal Westerns in which you played opposite actor Kirby Grant under the direction of Wallace Fox. Is this when you became known as Poni Adams and later Jane Adams?

JA: No. Actually, Conover, back in New York, had renamed me Poni Adams when I went to work for him. Then, when I went to Universal, the studio didn't care too much for the name Poni and decided to have a publicity contest, primarily involving servicemen overseas, inviting them to send in suggestions for a name. They eventually decided on Jane Adams.

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SS: Did you enjoy making Westerns?

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Jane Adams shares a laugh and a hug with the Frankenstein Monster (Glenn Strange) on the set of *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945).

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SS: How was Betty Jane Bierce discovered?

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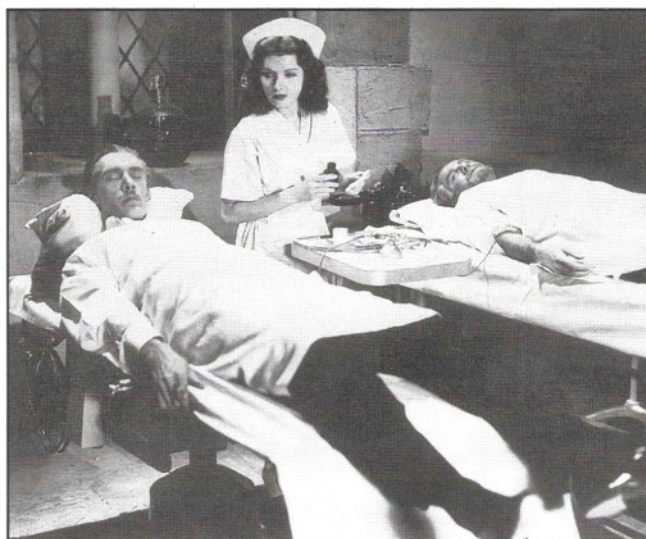
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LEFT: Nina (Jane Adams), the self-sacrificing hunchbacked nurse of Dr. Franz Edelmann (Onslow Stevens) in *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, little knows that she will make the ultimate sacrifice at the hands of the troubled scientist. **RIGHT:** Nina oversees a blood transfusion between Baron Latos (John Carradine) and Edelmann. The procedure ends tragically when Latos reverses the flow, tainting Edelmann's veins with the blood of . . . Dracula!

Grauman's Chinese Theater to see the picture, he just went into hysterics when the scene came up! (Laughs) He thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever seen!

SS: Also costarring in these films was the colorful character actor, Fuzzy Knight.

JA: Fuzzy Knight was always the clown. He sang and was a very talented musician. But, he was always clowning around and was lots of fun—much like Leo Carillo, who was also very much the clown.

SS: After small roles in *LADY ON A TRAIN* and *THIS LOVE OF OURS*, you went on to make horror-film history in *HOUSE OF DRACULA*. Is it safe to say that most of your fans today remember you best for this role?

JA: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely! You know, *HOUSE OF DRACULA* was really a spectacular sequel to *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. I receive numerous fan letters—from all over the world—and it's always very flattering because they usually say something about my having such a sensitive part in the film.

SS: What memories of making *HOUSE OF DRACULA* stand out most for you?

JA: Well, everyone was really quite serious on the set. I was fairly new to the business at the time and I remember just having so much fun, not to mention my having to wear such an unattractive outfit—which was kind of a change for me. It was such a fantasy film—full of heavies—very much like the theater. I really loved the fantasy of the sets, too. I think it was done in Soundstage 48, but I'm not sure since it was such a long time ago. I do know that particular set was used in scores of other movies. I still get such a kick out of seeing the same stairs and the same walls and the same windows over and over again. (Laughs)

SS: Except for a brief dream sequence, in which Nina's affliction has been corrected, you had to play your scenes as a hunchback. Did you have any reservations about the role?

JA: No, not at all! I truly loved the part of Nina! It was just great! Oh, I know it wasn't necessarily a big part, but it was

wonderful just the same, especially for a beginner in the business like myself. It was great working with Onslow Stevens and Glenn Strange and Ludwig Stossel and John Carradine and all these really good actors. Up to that point, I'd just been used to the Westerns, doing small parts where I had one line here and there. You know, "He went that-a-way!" or "My father is dying!" (Laughs)

SS: What exactly were you fitted with to give you the appearance of having a hunchback?

JA: It was a plaster-of-Paris mould. Nowadays, it would be made out of plastic and lightweight, but this one weighed quite a lot. Probably about ten pounds—which, for me, was quite heavy. They just dropped it over my shoulders every morning and that was it—and I kept it on through the whole picture, except for that one, lovely scene.

SS: Was it as uncomfortable as it looks?

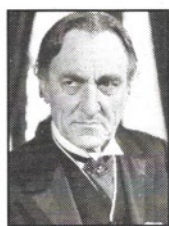
JA: No, it really wasn't all that bad.

SS: Like its predecessor, *HOUSE OF DRACULA* included Lon Chaney Jr. as the Wolf

LEFT: Edelmann is tempted to restore Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange) to full power, but is dissuaded by Nina and Larry Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.). **RIGHT:** Jane Adams takes a break between scenes with Erle C. Kenton, director of both *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944) and *HOUSE OF DRACULA*. **PAGE 49:** The Dream sequence.



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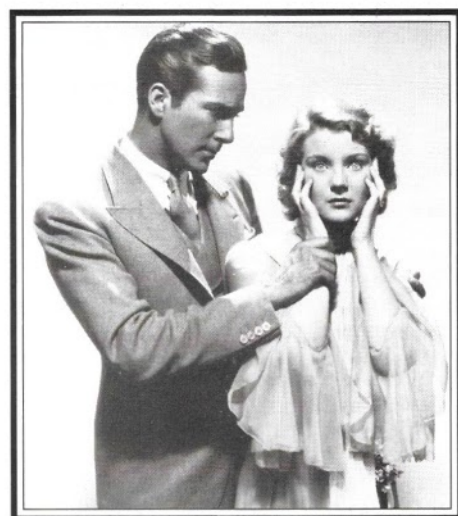
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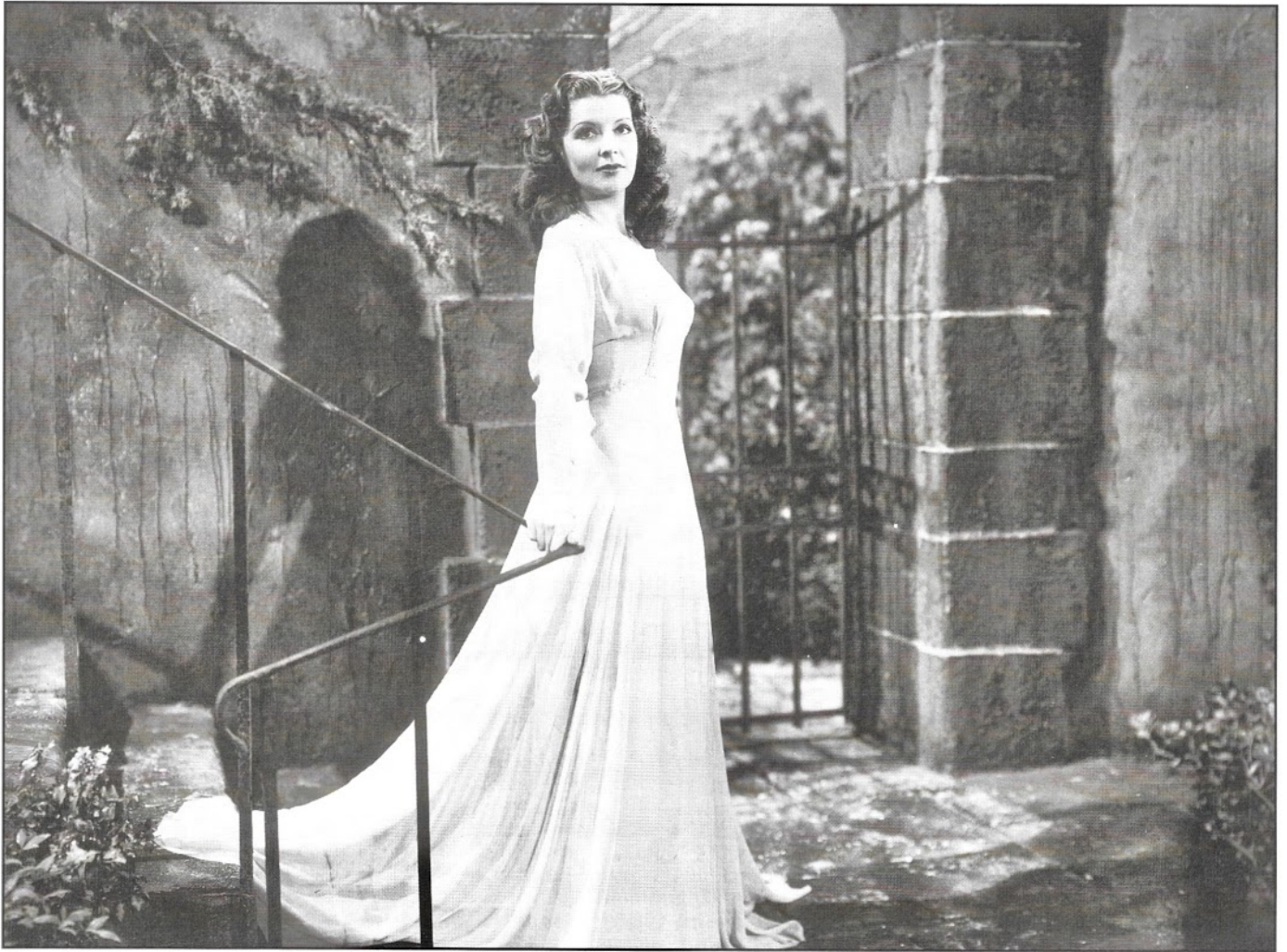
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Man, John Carradine as Dracula, and Glenn Strange as the Frankenstein Monster.

JA: Oh, it was so great! Number one, I simply enjoyed watching all these men act! As I say, they were very serious actors—maybe not Glenn Strange so much, but Onslow and John Carradine. I had worked with both of them before at the Playhouse. They were the old classical artists, a lot of Shakespeare in their backgrounds. Onslow was a very fine director, too. But, there wasn't anyone among all of them, even Martha O'Driscoll, who had much sense of humor during the filming. What I mean is, they were totally dedicated to their work and were excellent in their roles. In a way, it seemed like we all just sort of took on the spirit of the script.

SS: Did Onslow Stevens direct you in anything while you were at the Playhouse?

JA: Yes. He directed a few things that I did, although I can't recall what they were right now. Oh, and Victor Jory—if you remember him—also directed me in a Maxwell Anderson play at the Playhouse in which I had the lead—an excellent part.

SS: How about another *HOUSE* costar, Lionel Atwill? He was quite ill with cancer by the time he made this film.

JA: Really? I had no idea. I didn't get to know him too well. As I say, we went to the set, did what we had to do, and left. I honestly had no idea that he was ill at the time.

SS: Jack Pierce did the makeup for *HOUSE*, as he did for so many other films. What can you tell us about him?

JA: He was a very nice man—and very much on time. We didn't have many conversations, but he seemed quite nice. Of course, he was tops in his field, and the makeup he did was just fabulous. I honestly don't think it could be improved on even today.

SS: What about director Erle C. Kenton?

JA: He was a very good director and also immaculately groomed and dressed, I remember.

SS: Did you get to know him very well?

JA: No, not much. Most of the time I just went into my dressing room at noon and rested, taking my diet lunch with me. (Laughs) I mean, I'm usually very social and very outgoing. I really love people and enjoy life, but I guess it didn't hurt me to be serious on the set.

SS: Why do you think the classic horror films remain so vastly popular today?

JA: It's hard to say exactly why. Maybe it's because of all the fantasy. But, I tell you, it seems *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* gets an awful lot of publicity—even more so than *HOUSE OF DRACULA*. I'll pick up a magazine that has something about the old horror films, and it seems like almost all of them make some mention of *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. I really wish we could get more publicity for *HOUSE OF DRACULA*!

SS: You obviously feel very strongly about the film, don't you?

JA: Oh, yes! I thoroughly enjoyed making it and honestly wouldn't trade anything for the experience.

SS: You starred in one other horror picture for Universal, *THE BRUTE MAN*, which was ultimately released by PRC in 1946. Your costar was Rondo Hatton, who suffered from acromegaly.

JA: It was hard working with him, but mainly because I felt so sorry for him. His was a natural affliction and I felt like maybe he was being exploited. I don't like to see things like that happen. He would occasionally forget his lines, but he was always extremely polite. Unfortunately, it wasn't long afterwards that he died. I have a copy, but we hardly ever look at any of my films because my grandchildren aren't the least bit interested. In fact, *HOUSE OF DRACULA* was on TV recently, and my grandson said, "Switch the channel!" (Laughs) Oh, they love me dearly, but they're just not interested in the old films.

SS: In *THE BRUTE MAN*, you played another handicapped woman.

JA: Yes, I played a blind girl in the film.

SS: Did you find it difficult to portray someone blind?

JA: No, I didn't, actually—although I don't know if I did it properly or not, simply because I really didn't consult with anybody at the time. Basically, I just



LEFT: Jane Adams felt sorry for the way Universal was exploiting Rondo Hatton and, for that reason, didn't particularly enjoy making *THE BRUTE MAN* (1946), which wound up being released by PRC. **RIGHT:** Jane was the first actress to portray Vicki Vale on the silver screen, in the Columbia serial *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1949). Imagine the Boy Wonder having a wild ride 48 years before meeting Joel Schumacher . . .

didn't focus on any one thing and mostly looked straight ahead. The thing is, the character I was portraying was a very sweet and compassionate person, in contrast to Rondo Hatton's character, which served as the reason why he was attracted to me in the first place. So, I just tried to concentrate on the personality of my character more than how I needed to appear blind.

SS: You played Lotus A NIGHT IN PARADISE, starring Merle Oberon, Turhan Bey, and Gale Sondergaard.

JA: Yes, though I didn't get to know either Merle Oberon or Gale Sondergaard too well. I did, however, get to know Turhan Bey a bit. I still see him occasionally at the Universal reunions. He's much older now, of course, but he's still quite attractive—very suave and very well-mannered. Also, very gray, too, but still quite distinguished . . .

SS: You starred in two serials, 1946's *LOST CITY OF THE JUNGLE* for Universal . . .

JA: Yes, Lionel Atwill died during the production.

SS: . . . and *BATMAN AND ROBIN* for Columbia in 1949. How did making a serial differ from making a feature?

JA: Well, I remember I had a very short script for each chapter, which made it quite different from doing a regular feature film. And it was difficult, too, because we had to skip from one part to another. We'd go from, say, Chapter Two to Chapter Seven, then back to Chapter Four. There was no correlation.

SS: Major changes took place at Universal during 1946, and the eventual merging of Universal and International Pictures resulted in the relinquishing of the B-film units. Was the transition responsible for your contract with the studio coming to an end?

JA: It actually worked out quite well, because my husband was just returning from 14 months of occupation duties with the Army in Japan. We were looking forward to being together and getting settled. Moreover, I didn't know any of

the new people coming into the studio, and they had already been releasing a lot of the old contract players, so I knew my days there were probably numbered anyway. I saw it as my chance to leave. Basically, it turned out to be more of a mutual decision between me and the studio—and one that I was actually very happy about.

SS: Of your directors at Universal, who would you say was your favorite?

JA: Oh, I think I liked Jean Yarbrough's personality the best—the way he handled people on the set. But, I have to say that I liked Erle Kenton quite a lot, too, because he was so very thorough and forthright.

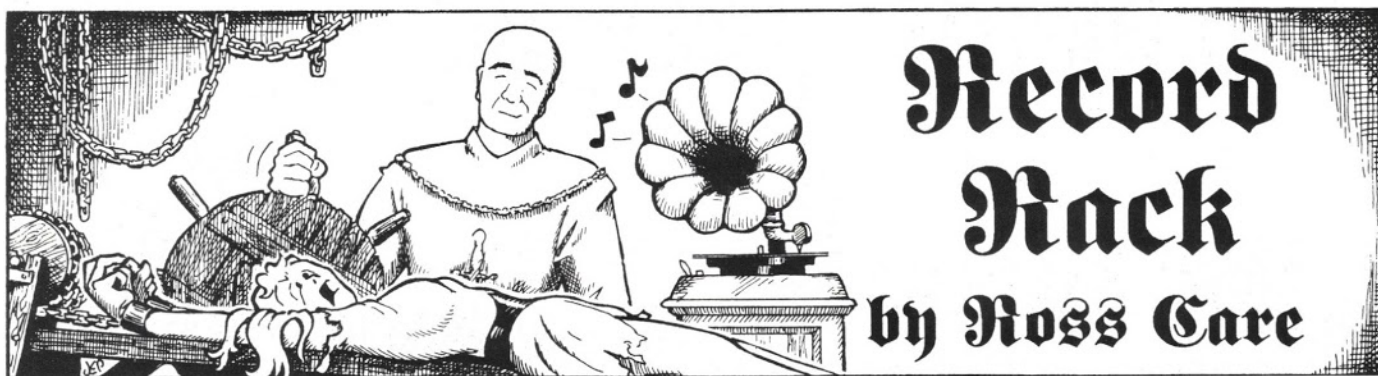
SS: After you left Universal, audiences didn't see you on the screen again until 1948, when you appeared briefly as Nurse Scanlon in the film noir classic, *HE WALKED BY NIGHT*.

JA: You know how that happened? After my respite from contract days at Universal, my agent continued to call regarding undemanding parts that he felt might be

Continued on page 74

LEFT: Jane Adams doesn't have very strong memories of making *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, but then her costars (Robert Lowery and Johnny Duncan as Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson) were so conservatively dressed! **RIGHT:** Jane played a blind woman in *THE BRUTE MAN*, Rondo Hatton's last film.





Record Rack

by Ross Care

Music for Gods, Monsters, and Bugs

In the often generic field of current film scoring, Carter Burwell's score for *GODS AND MONSTERS* (1998), Bill Condon's Oscar-winning fantasia on director James Whale, stands out for being as unique and sensitively executed as this rare and haunting film itself. Scored for a small ensemble of strings, with harp, piano, and a quartet of solo woodwinds, Burwell's score eschews the expected (and obvious) horror modes to evoke instead the internalized and all too human aspects of the last days of one of the great masters of the screen. Only in a few cues ("Franken-whale" and "Last Swim") does the score rise out of its contemplative mood, but even then it avoids any suggestion of horror clichés (or of Franz Waxman's 1935 *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* score). The opening cue, "Arise Clay," with the score's recurrent Old World waltz melding into a kind of dream-march with touches of percussion (including sleigh bells!) is especially effective. This is the music of bittersweet regret and banked fires, and if yours happens to be that special mood of romantically introspective *weltschmerz* (or you just feel like something sensitive yet intensely beautiful) you couldn't do better than to put this on and go with it. Not really horror music in the expected sense, it is, however, one of the best scores of the year, if not the best . . .

The 77th Voyage of Benny

The Bernard Herrmann revival, well-chronicled in *RECORD RACK* throughout the nineties, continues as Millennium Approaches. The latest Herrmann series is from Varese Sarabande, their Harryhausen line kicking off with Benny's first and greatest Dynamation score, *THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1958). *VOYAGE* was one of the few Herrmann scores to receive a vinyl release (Colpix CP-504) in the fifties, and went on to become a sought after item on the soundtrack collectors market. Varese reissued it on compact disc in 1980 (VCD47256), a revelation in that all but a few tracks were finally available in true stereo, an (alleged) stereo edition of the original LP having been rare (or nonexistent).

Now Varese returns to the eclectically mythic fantasyland of cyclops and fire-breathing dragons with a complete edition of one of Herrmann's most melodic and least monotonous scores. The origi-

nal LP, with the best tracks from the film selected by the composer himself, remains a tough act to follow. Like certain key ST albums of the LP era (1957's *RAINTREE COUNTY*, 1961's *SUMMER AND SMOKE*, 1971's *CHINATOWN*), *VOYAGE* is a well-neigh perfect experience in film-music listening. (They edited out the less interesting material in those days.) But *VOYAGE*, unlike some other Herrmann scores, also holds up well in its

entirety. Herrmann treated the film almost like an exotic Russian ballet from the late 18th century, and his score is a kind of *divertimento fantastique* of vivid set pieces for the film's peak live and animated moments, the highlights of course being Harryhausen's also balletic creature sequences ("Cobra Dance," "Duel With the Skeleton").

All the tracks from the original LP are among the complete 37 heard on the new disc, but in their original cinematic context (i. e., the "Sultan's Feast" cue is interrupted as in the film, then recommences). Among the many cues not heard on LP, the opening "Fog" track, and the exotic Balinese sounds of the scene inside the magic lamp, "The Genie's Home," are wonderful, never before available Herrmann rediscoveries. (In passing, I wonder: has anyone ever noted that Herrmann seems to have "borrowed" the "Magic Spell" motif and the opening of the "Cobra Dance" from the "Nightmare" music in Rozsa's 1945 *SPELLBOUND*?)

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra under John Debney renders a masterful performance of this virtuoso score, if one that does not always quite measure up to the brute power and luminous intensity of Herrmann's original. I also have to comment that, in comparing the two *VOYAGE* recordings (on CD) for this review, the body and presence of the original analogue makes digital sound seem just a bit pallid (even at 20 bits). For me, this new edition stands as a worthy adjunct to the incomparable original, though the new cues also make having both versions almost imperative. (And children of the digital age may actually prefer the new disc). The new Peak cover painting is also tremendous, like a scene from the film reconstituted as a shadowy, darkly beautiful nightmare image.

In its Herrmann/Hitchcock line, Varese Sarabande offers another premiere with a complete *THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY* (1955). The least known of the Benny/Hitch scores, this 40-cue disc thus reveals more relatively unfamiliar Herrmann material. While a good deal of the music for Hitch's second favorite among his own films, what Leslie Halliwell calls "a determinedly gay black comedy," is uncharacteristically droll (for the usually dead-serious Herrmann), there is also more lyrical Herrmann here than one would suspect from the "Portrait of Hitch" concert suite drawn from this score. Herrmann's



first effort for Hitchcock is also a pivotal one, the lighter cues harking back to his jocular *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) mode, with the more lyrical and surprisingly poignant moments pointing ahead to the later, more intense Hitchcockian mode.

The Varese Sarabande Hitchcock series also includes a new full-length *PSYCHO* (1960) recording. I have asked my colleague and lifelong Hitchcock/*PSYCHO* authority/devotee, writer Charles Leayman, to discuss the new version. Mr. Leayman comments:

"While there's perhaps very little still to be said about either *PSYCHO*, or Herrmann's unique score, Joel McNeely's superb CD of the latter can now safely be regarded as definitive. In retaining (ac-

quiesced to Hitchcock's last-minute reediting. (The lost cue is immensely effective, but by now it's almost impossible to imagine the cellar sequence without those shrieking violins over the image of Mrs. Bates' ghastly skull: music that links Lila's aghast reaction back to Marion's, as both women, faced with something traumatically horrible, undergo sheer, helpless shock.)

"All in all, Joel McNeely and the Royal Scottish are to be congratulated for giving Herrmann's 'black-and-white score' its most somberly passionate and exhilaratingly grim rendering. Even the irascible Benny himself would surely be impressed."

Thank you, Chuck, for guesting on the RECORD RACK.

Though the title sounds like a horror movie, for the unique change of hearing Herrmann score a Western, I cite in passing Bill Stromberg and John Morgan's recent restoration of *GARDEN OF EVIL* (1954) on Marco Polo, another complete premiere. Aside from the fascinating experience of hearing Benny in an uncharacteristic "Wagon Wheels" mode, *EVIL* is also of interest for being scored for symphony orchestra expanded by nine percussionists, and for some strange "wind harmonic" effects from the brass. Some of the orchestrations were arranged to exploit the four-track stereophonic sound of CinemaScope, and these spatial effects are also recreated in the new recording. The compact disc opens with an eight-movement suite from *PRINCE OF PLAYERS* (1955), the bio of the American Shakespearean actor who also happened to be the brother of the man who shot Lincoln.

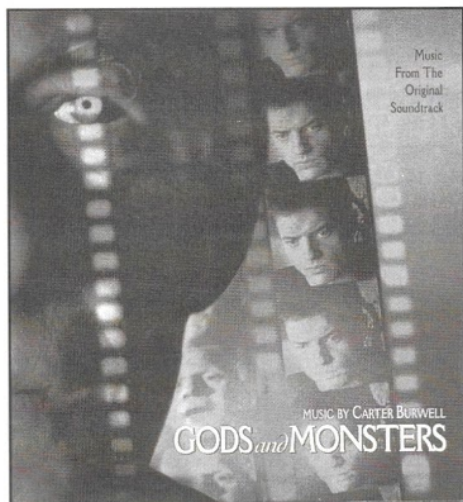
Mighty Jim Horner

Remaking RKO's neat little fantasy, *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* (itself a 1949 re-tread of 1933's *KING KONG*, but with an ape with less attitude) is not quite so audacious as actually remaking *KING KONG*. (But, hey, I forgot—they've already done that, too!) Well, the concern here is not the advisability of classic remakes, but the music for one of them, specifically the score wherein James Horner moves from the big boat to the big ape.

Horner's *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* is a really big action score, in structure, forces employed, and duration, the CD featuring 73 minutes of pure underscoring (i.e., no pop tunes here). Its 12 tracks, many clocking in at from six to nine minutes in length, create a cycle of orchestral tone poems reaching near-symphonic proportions. "Sacred Guardian of the Mountain" opens the disc with the throbbing jungle drums used throughout the score. Choral chords and swirling strings answered by solo trumpet then repeat in ritualistic sequence until giving way to the first delicate statement: the pastoral lullaby which will also become one of the score's major elements. The 7.52 "Poachers" track is almost a cantata for voices and orchestra. An orchestral opening builds to a climax, then shifts

to a vocal sequence in which a folk-like ethnic tune is stated by a charmingly tentative child's voice, then by a massed (pseudo) native choir. "Attempting Capture" is the score's first (but far from last) big action cue, followed by a poetic interlude, "The Trees," an orchestral/electronic mini tone poem suggesting a phrase from Eric Overmyer's play, *ON THE VERGE*: "the jeweled jungle . . ." But jeweled or not, there's little peace for long in this jungle and things again come to a heated climax, but not before some airily glistening variations on the lullaby theme.

After years of reading Horner jibes in *Film Score Monthly* (where one can also partake of detailed speculations on Horner's alleged self-plagiarism), I found JOE YOUNG a pleasant surprise. Admittedly, it's not the greatest fantasy score ever written, but it is a substantial one, powerful, dramatic, and atmospheric, and with some haunting lyrical rushes thrown in. (Remember melody in film music?) A kind of eclectic but appealing Soundtrack cum New Age cum World Music fusion, Horner's mode is also intrinsically cinematic (in a nineties way) and the perfect aural counterpart for pristine, if sometimes sterile, digital imagery, and uncannily realistic computerized exfx. As score (and film) move into its second half, the big action moments admittedly predominate, but there are enough modulated "down" moments to provide contrast. True, I could not discern much of a per-

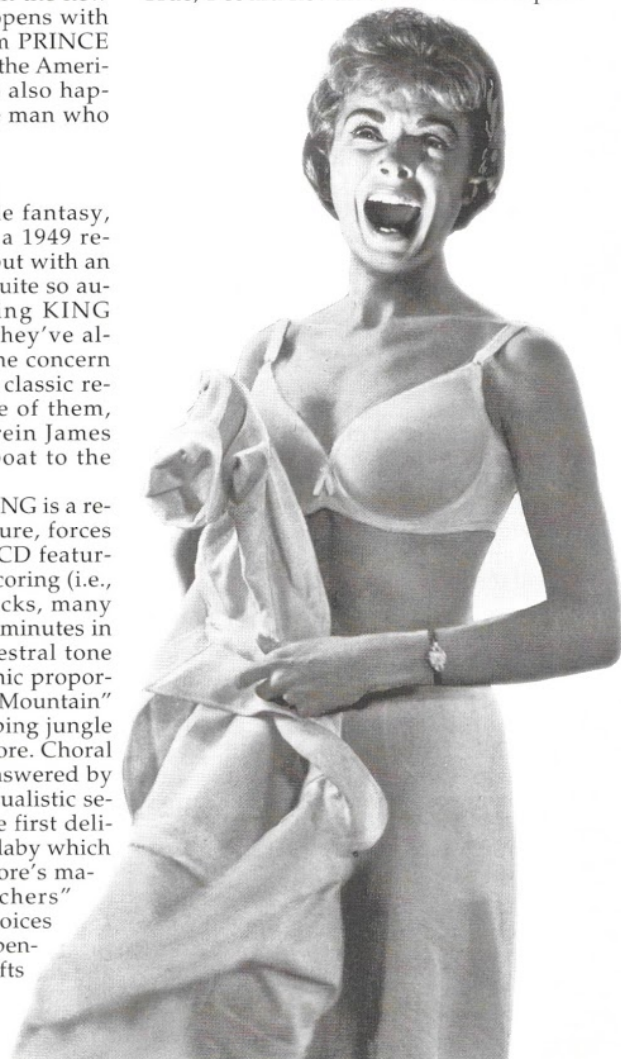


cording to Kevin Mulhall's excellent liner notes) 'every note of all 40 cues composed by Herrmann for the film,' and by (somewhat) restoring the original tempi lacking on earlier recordings (some of these, ironically, by Herrmann himself, who considerably slowed down some cues), McNeely affords this masterpiece the sheen and burnish so richly its due. For once and all, the listener hears exactly what the late Page Cook meant when he dubbed the score 'ferociously beautiful.'

"I have long felt that some of Herrmann's most moving and sublime music occurs during the film's opening scenes. 'The City,' 'Marion,' and 'Marion and Sam,' underscoring their tryst in the drab Phoenix hotel room, resonate with a hopeless, heartbreaking poignancy that lends terrible reality to the phrase, 'lives of quiet desperation.' And in 'Temptation,' as Marion in her room contemplates the envelope with the \$40,000 that she is on the verge of stealing, the 'high-range violins playing crescendo/decrescendo' (Mulhall) give the eerie impression of a series of subterranean sighs, welling from depths little sensed or understood.

"McNeely offers the world premiere of a cue, 'The Cleanup,' for an extended sequence detailing Norman's bathroom duties after Marion's murder, music Hitchcock eventually deleted.

Also heard is Herrmann's original conception of Lila's finding Mrs. Bates' corpse in the fruit cellar ('Discovery'; the composer didn't intend to reprise his





PAGE 51: It can't be that Janet Leigh has just heard the new Varese Sarabande recording of Bernard Herrmann's complete *PSYCHO* score, because it's wonderful. No, she must have seen Gus Van Sant's recent remake of the Alfred Hitchcock masterpiece from 1960. **LEFT:** Gene Tierney really tumbles for Cornel Wilde in the *film noir* classic *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (1945)—right down the stairs in order to avoid having to share him with a baby. **CENTER:** Frankly, my dear, we do give a damn, though *RECORD RACK*'s Ross Care doesn't think Max Steiner's score for *GONE WITH THE WIND* (1939) is exactly a classic. Pictured are Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, as if anyone didn't know. **RIGHT:** John Forsythe, Shirley MacLaine, Mildred Natwick, and Edmund Gwenn really dug working for Hitchcock. Bernard Herrmann's marvelously macabre score for the Master's *THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY* (1955) has finally been recorded in its entirety.

sonal voice here, (but where can you these days?) and the music does not seem to develop so much as wash over you like the closing moments of *TITANIC*. The percussive "chase" music and jolts of dissonance also seem rather Goldsmithian (but, it might be noted, suggestive of the early Goldsmith, who was himself influenced by Bartok and Ligeti), but Horner works the many agitated passages required by this kind of film with a relatively fresh hand. And I mean, how many chases, cataclysms, debacles, and burning Ferris wheels can you take on and still come up with something earth-shatteringly original? The composer seems to meet the grueling action genre challenge with stamina and endurance.

This disc offers a big chunk of music, but holds up relatively well, even over repeated listenings. After the last four big action cues (over 25 minutes of *Sturm und Drang*, which do become a little much after awhile), a 8.44 track, "Dedication and Windsong," concludes the disc with a moving and relatively tranquil choral/instrumental reprise of the score's major lyrical themes.

Airing the Archives

After the Fox: Along with its Herrmann releases, busy Varese Sarabande also moves ahead with Nick Redman's 20th Century-Fox line. *MUSIC FROM THE GOLDEN AGE* is an anthology of 28 varied original soundtrack main titles and cues (in mono and stereo) from the forties through Goldsmith's 1970 *PATTON*. Happily, much emphasis is placed on that particularly gilded age, the mid-fifties populuxe CinemaScope era, a rich stereophonic renaissance of film music with legends such as Newman, Friedhofer, Herrmann, North, and Goldsmith (and

lesser-knowns such as Leigh Harline and Irving Gertz) providing brilliant and innovative 20th scores.

Along with the expected tracks are some surprises: Newman's intense *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (1945), his sophisticated *THE BEST OF EVERYTHING* (1959), and Friedhofer's gritty *VIOLENT SATURDAY* (1955). Ah, Friedhofer, what a subtle genius! His tracks, like *RAINS OF RANCHIPUR* (1955) here, sound better with each hearing. Let's hope Sarabande considers a disc devoted to his music soon. (RE Hugo Friedhofer: I also quickly mention another recent Marco Polo Stromberg/Morgan release, their excellent Friedhofer anthology featuring an intriguing suite from *THE LODGER*, a 1944 Fox film about Jack the Ripper.)

Listen also for the track from *THE STRIPPER* (1963) to hear the profound influence of Alex North on the early Goldsmith.

From even deeper within Hollywood's Golden Age comes Rhino Records' ultimate *GONE WITH THE WIND* (1939). This 1996 gatefold edition is a companion to their definitive *WIZARD OF OZ* (reviewed in *Scarlet Street* #25) with the same exhaustive two-disc score restoration and fascinating liner booklet. To me, the most compelling aspects of GWTW have always been the divine Vivien Leigh and William Cameron Menzies' stylized production design (the exteriors around postwar Tara invariably evoking for this viewer the sand-pit landscape from 1953's *INVADERS FROM MARS*). Call it blasphemy, but I have always been less than enthralled by Max Steiner's epic score (for which, I might add, Friedhofer served as one of a team of orchestrators). But for devotees of both GWTW and the hard-working Mr. Steiner, this

set is the ultimate recorded version of Max's melodic if, well, sort of routine score. Detailed credits and some expanded cues are included.

Now if only Rhino would restore one of Steiner's genuinely interesting late scores, *HELEN OF TROY* (1955), in similar detail.

Silva Screen's two-disc set, *THE OMEN*, is subtitled "The Essential Jerry Goldsmith Film Music Collection." It's certainly a comprehensive one, presenting over two-hours of newly-recorded Goldsmith from *THE BLUE MAX* (1966) to *POWER* (1997). The selections are in the form of single cues and suites, and the performances (by the City of Prague Philharmonic) are precise and rather matter of fact with not too much time wasted on individual mood and ambiance. A good collection for Goldsmith virgins who want to cover the waterfront, but don't want to spend all that dough on all those individual albums...

While killer bees (1978's *THE SWARM*) get their due on the Goldsmith set, Angel has also released the Harry Gregson-Williams/John Powell score (produced by Hans Zimmer) for *ANTZ*. This score for "the other bug movie" is amusing and high-tech, fluctuating between being deliberately cartoonish and earnestly stirring, while offering hints of Henry Mancini and Spike Jones along the way. It probably works very well in the film, but 52.43 minutes of insectoid mood swings on CD are a little much. Where are the Buggles when we need them?

Ross Care's theater scores for productions of *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* and *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* were heard around the country this winter. He can be reached at rosscompose@hotmail.com.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICES OF TERROR

BBC Radio Writer Bert Coules

interviewed by
Tom Amorosi and Richard Valley

In 1987, writer Bert Coules began a grand adventure that would lead, two years later (at 10:15am on October 9, 1989), to the BBC radio recording of the first Sherlock Holmes mystery starring Clive Merrison as Holmes and Michael Williams as Dr. Watson. Eight years, seven months, seventeen days, and approximately nine hours later, Merrison and Williams spoke the final words of the final episode—and for the first time in history, the entire Canon of Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had been taped with the same two actors in the lead roles.

Here, in the conclusion of an exclusive chat with *Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror*, Bert Coules tells us how it happened . . .

Scarlet Street: One of the most interesting things about radio is the way the sound effects are accomplished. On American radio in the thirties and forties, there were some effects that were almost stars in themselves—for instance, Jack Benny's Maxwell and Fibber McGee's closet. How were the sound effects done on the BBC Sherlock Holmes series?

Bert Coules: In two different ways, really; they're divided into two totally separate things. First, we have what are called "spot effects." A spot-effects operator is a technician who's in the studio with the actors and who makes the sounds that the actors would make if they weren't holding their scripts. If this were a radio set and we were actors and you said, "Let me pour you some wine," a technician would stand beside you and, as you said your line, would pick up the bottle, clink it

very gently, and pour. You would say, "Is that enough?" I would say, "Yes, thank you"—and then the technician would put the bottle down. That's a very simple example, but at its most complicated, it's almost like a ballet. The spot-effects operator is an actor who doesn't actually say anything and, like all actors in a scene, his performance can either make or break the other performances. Also, it has to be said that the actors can make or break his performance! But watching a really good, experienced radio cast and a really good, experienced spot-effects operator is beautiful! It's a very difficult choreography!

SS: If you're an actor with the line, "Let me pour you some wine" and you're really, as they say, in the moment, wouldn't you almost feel compelled to reach out for the bottle and pour it yourself?

BC: The compulsion is less if you're holding a 60-page script. (Laughs)

SS: There's another problem! How do you turn the pages of your script without making any noise?

BC: Oh, that! That's an art! Different actors have different techniques, but the basic one is to keep talking, reading out of the side of your eye, and then gently turn the page without moving your head. It's very difficult!

SS: Why don't you give them loose sheets?

BC: Because loose sheets fall and make a noise.

SS: Well, dip them in a bucket of water.

BC: Oh, that's good! That's very good! (Laughs) Actually, the minute you listen to a show and think of the problems, that means we failed. We've got to take the audience far away from a tacky basement

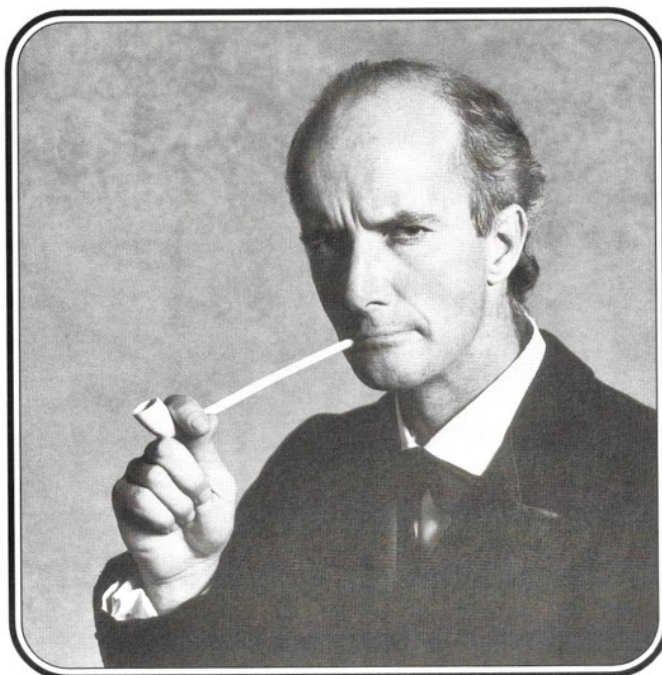
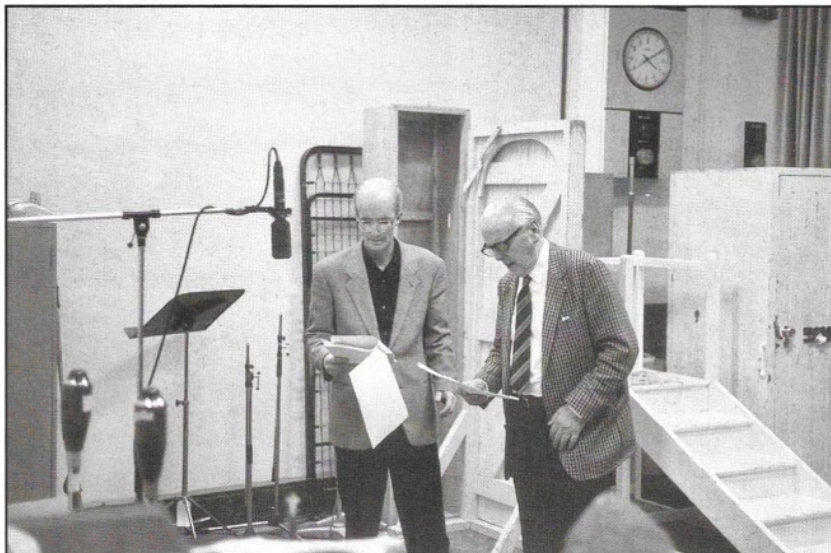


Photo: BBC



Photo: BBC



PAGE 53: Clive Merrison and Roger Rees were the two actors who portrayed Sherlock Holmes in the BBC radio series. **LEFT:** Merrison and George Cole record a scene between Holmes and Josiah Amberley in *THE RETIRED COLOURMAN*. Noted the cluttered, unatmospheric surroundings which, through the magic of radio, become Victorian England to the listener. **RIGHT:** The Baker Street Regulars: Merrison (Holmes), Stephen Thorne (Inspector Lestrade), Michael Williams (Dr. Watson), John Hartley (Mycroft Holmes), and Joan Matheson (Mrs. Hudson).

studio and broadcasting house in London, with used coffee cups all over and actors and actresses who aren't made up and who aren't dressed . . .

SS: Who aren't dressed?

BC: I mean, they're sloppily dressed! (Laughs) It's one of the hardest mediums for actors and there are some who admit they cannot do it. And there are some actors who shine in radio and nowhere else! We have to create an entire world in the studio, with voices and sound effects . . .

SS: Sound effects! What's the second half of your answer to our sound-effects question. Half the effects are the spot-effects operator.

BC: And the other half are recorded sound effects, which are played in from the control booth. There are two technicians in the booth. There's the one in charge who sits at a panel which is exactly like a film or TV sound panel, balancing all the separate elements, and there's the guy at the back who's going berserk with banks of CD players, banks of tape players, banks of analog players. Suppose you have the scene at the Reichenbach Falls, where Holmes and Moriarty have their final fight. The guy doing recorded effects produced the sound of the waterfalls by mixing at least five separate recordings together. We did a rehearsal and it sounded great, but he suddenly said, "No, no, I don't like the waterfalls; I'll put some volcano in it!" (Laughs) And he got out a disc of a volcano erupting and put it in just to beef up the base sound! Because of the policy of putting all the elements together on one take, any one thing going wrong means that everything has to be done again. So everybody is depending on everybody else; it's the most amazing example of concentrated team work!

SS: Did you manage throughout the series to have the same Mrs. Hudson, the same Lestrade, the same Mycroft . . . ?

BC: We've had the same Mycroft. We lost Lestrade for a series, which was a great

shame! He was away doing a play. You must understand that, even though his presence appears to be a prominent one, Inspector Lestrade isn't in all that many of the stories.

SS: He's only in 12, isn't he?

BC: I believe so. It's an awfully small number. And in the one's he's in, he doesn't tend to be in a great deal! I know exceptions to that, but often Lestrade just plays a small role. In the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Lestrade has just a small scene at the end. He doesn't in my version, because I've cut him. That was practical, because you can't bring a guest actor in for so small a scene in radio. We've had three Mrs. Hudsons. We had a different Mrs. Hudson in *A STUDY IN SCARLET* and *THE SIGN OF THE FOUR*, which were done some distance before we got started on the short stories. But we've had the same Mrs. Hudson throughout since then, except for Judi Dench making a cameo for the final show, *THE RETIRED COLOURMAN*.

SS: Who's been in charge of the production for the BBC?

BC: Yes, I should mention the producers, Patrick Rayner and Enyd Williams. They have produced and directed all of the short stories. And they divided up the directing between them. They do an amazing job, controlling the kind of forces that we've talked about and the kind of tensions that can arrive. They kept it amazingly calm. It's astonishing what good fun we had at the sessions considering how much was riding on them, how little time there always was. Basically, if we haven't recorded everything by seven o'clock on the second day, we're not going to get it. You can't bring on actor back without incurring a lot of difficulty.

SS: The entire show had to be wrapped in two days?

BC: From the cast assembly on the morning of the first day, through the cast leaving on the evening of the second day, is

the entire production time span. First read through, rehearsals, takes, retakes, everything! You tend to have one or two days for post-production. Two days is a luxury for editing the takes in sequence, editing the retakes, and a slight amount of rebalancing. We don't work on multi-track; it all goes down on two-track stereo, so a lot of rejigging is not possible. There is an awful lot of pressure riding on absolutely everybody involved!

SS: Sounds like it! How many scripts ahead did you work?

BC: In general, all the scripts were written for a series before the series went into the studio.

SS: Was it difficult to schedule the recording sessions with your stars?

BC: Yes, it was very difficult to get Clive Merrison and Michael Williams together for an appreciable space of time. They're both very busy, well-known actors, and Michael is off currently filming a TV series somewhere, Clive is touring with The National Theatre—so to find a window for both of them when we can grab them together and when they don't just want to go off on holiday, when they're willing to work very intensively on this sort of project, is very difficult. For that reason, for example, we did *THE CASEBOOK* in two halves, three programs at a time. I wrote three, including *THE MAZARIN STONE*—without much of *THE MAZARIN STONE*, thank God!

SS: That can't have hurt!

BC: Before we tape, there are always notes from the producer and director, of course. That's good. A different person's perspective is always valuable. I get very close to these scripts and it's possible for someone to come in and say, "Hey, but you haven't explained that exactly" or, "We're quite in the dark about that" or even, "Wouldn't it be a great idea if you did this?" I can give you an example of that. We were talking about *THE SOLITARY CYCLIST*, and how sometimes the

stories are more about the central character than they are about Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. THE SOLITARY CYCLIST is about the girl, Violet Smith, and how she comes to realize that the man she admires is not an admirable man at all. I finished the script in the same way that the story finishes, which is that she makes this discovery and she is unwell and taken off to her room. Watson looks after her, and then Holmes and Watson confront the villain, Carruthers, with what he's done. Well, I sent this in and Patrick Rayner phoned me up and said, "No, no, no, the ending is all wrong!" And I said, "But, it's the ending of the story!" One of the briefs to the writers is that you have to be "imaginatively faithful." That's a wonderful phrase, I think—"imaginatively faithful." We don't depart enormously from the story, but we can help it. Particularly if it's wrong, we can help it. So Patrick said, "No, the story is all wrong! She's got to confront Carruthers at the end! There is no way that we can ask the audience to listen through 45 minutes and live through her experience and then not have her face him with it at the very end." And I said, "Fine!" And he said, "No, it's absolutely essential, the crux of her story. It's her story; she's got to finish it! She's got to come down and face the guy! And I said, "Fine." And then I went away and wrote a final scene, which isn't in Doyle at all but which I'm totally unapologetic about. It's beautifully played and it's a very powerful moment. She faces him and tells him what she thinks of him and that's the end. And we hear him lonely and alone in the end, singing a final song. I was so grateful to Patrick, because that improved the show a hundred fold and it's not something I would have dared on my own, to depart quite so much from the story as it was written.

SS: How do you handle especially difficult stories, like THE MAZARIN STONE or THE NOBLE BACHELOR?

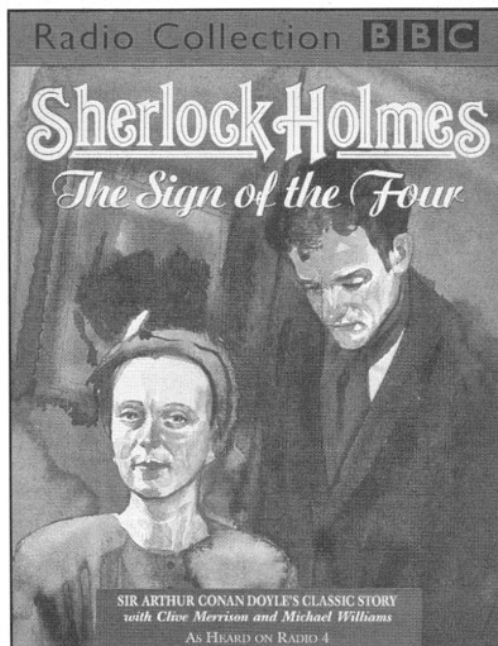
BC: THE NOBLE BACHELOR was a particularly difficult one to do, because it has a fault as a story. It has a characteristic that it shares with several of the other Sherlock Holmes stories, which is that Sherlock Holmes doesn't actually do anything in it! Essentially, Holmes is told the story of the problem of the noble bachelor, solves it instantly without getting out of his chair, and presents the client with the solution. That's the story! It's very difficult to wring 45 minutes of drama out of your leading character solving the problem just like that! (Snaps fingers) It's surprising how many of the stories that's true of, really, when you have to sit down and analyze them. It's amazing how little Sherlock Holmes often does. It's a tribute to the power of the character that he lives through stories where he's hardly present!

SS: What did you do before you became a writer for the BBC?

BC: I used to work for the BBC. (Laughs) I used to be a BBC staff member. Actually, I was a librarian; I worked in the music library. Then I wrote a documentary about Wagner. I don't quite know why—I mean, I just thought it was an interesting thing to try and do. I sent it in and to my absolute amazement, they bought it! I was invited over to the studio and that was my first taste of being a collaborative element on something like that. As you might gather from the way I've been describing to you, it's a wonderful thing to be part of. . . .

SS: Yes, it does! We'll be applying for jobs with the BBC tomorrow.

BC: (Laughs) After that, I moved from the music library and I became a technician at



the BBC, purely because I wanted to be a part of that. I did eight, nine years as a technician and then I got to be a drama producer for a few years. And all the time I was writing stuff and getting it bought—so finally I decided, well, if I don't do it, now, I'll never do it! So I gave up the job and wrote full time!

SS: From everything you've said, the BBC seems to be extremely encouraging to newcomers. That sort of thing would never happen in America. For one thing, the Writers Guild would have you drummed out of town!

BC: Absolutely! Absolutely! It's absolutely unique! Anyone who comes in for radio—television is different—but anyone who comes in for radio with a script will have it looked at and considered.

SS: Even from the United States?

BC: Oh, absolutely! (Laughs) Of course, it's necessary for you to understand that there is no such thing as the BBC. The

BBC is a loose conglomeration of tiny little departments, each of which, on the whole, lives its own little life and goes its own little way. Radio drama is a little enclave in a little corner, fighting at times against everything else—particularly against television, where all of the funding goes, and all of the publicity pushing goes. BBC has five countrywide networks. Radio 4, which is the main speech network, is where the Sherlock Holmes programs go out. And it's been called the best kept secret in England, because they can't publicize it! The radio people who want to publicize it have no money and no expertise. BBC publicity, the people who should be publicizing it, are only interested in TV.

SS: You'd think they'd get behind Sherlock Holmes; after all, he's a national institution.

In the eighties and nineties, Holmes has been all over the place—television, radio, and dozens of pastiches published with the permission of the Conan Doyle estate. To what do you attribute this unending popularity?

BC: I wish I had an easy answer for that and I don't. Part of it is a nostalgic yearning for the setting. Victorian England is very appealing to the modern Englishman and woman—this sense of a world where, to put it simply, everybody had a place and everything was ordered and everybody knew exactly where they stood in relation to everybody else. However horrible in reality it was for the people at the very bottom of the pecking order, there is something extraordinarily appealing about a world where you know how to behave and how to react and. . .

SS: And what's expected of you.

BC: And what's expected of you! There's a politeness and an orderliness about it that a lot of people find appealing. There's a very nostalgic call for the sort of England and, particularly, the sort of London that probably never existed in reality. I mean, the foggy streets and the Hansom cabs and everybody sort of secure and snug and. . .

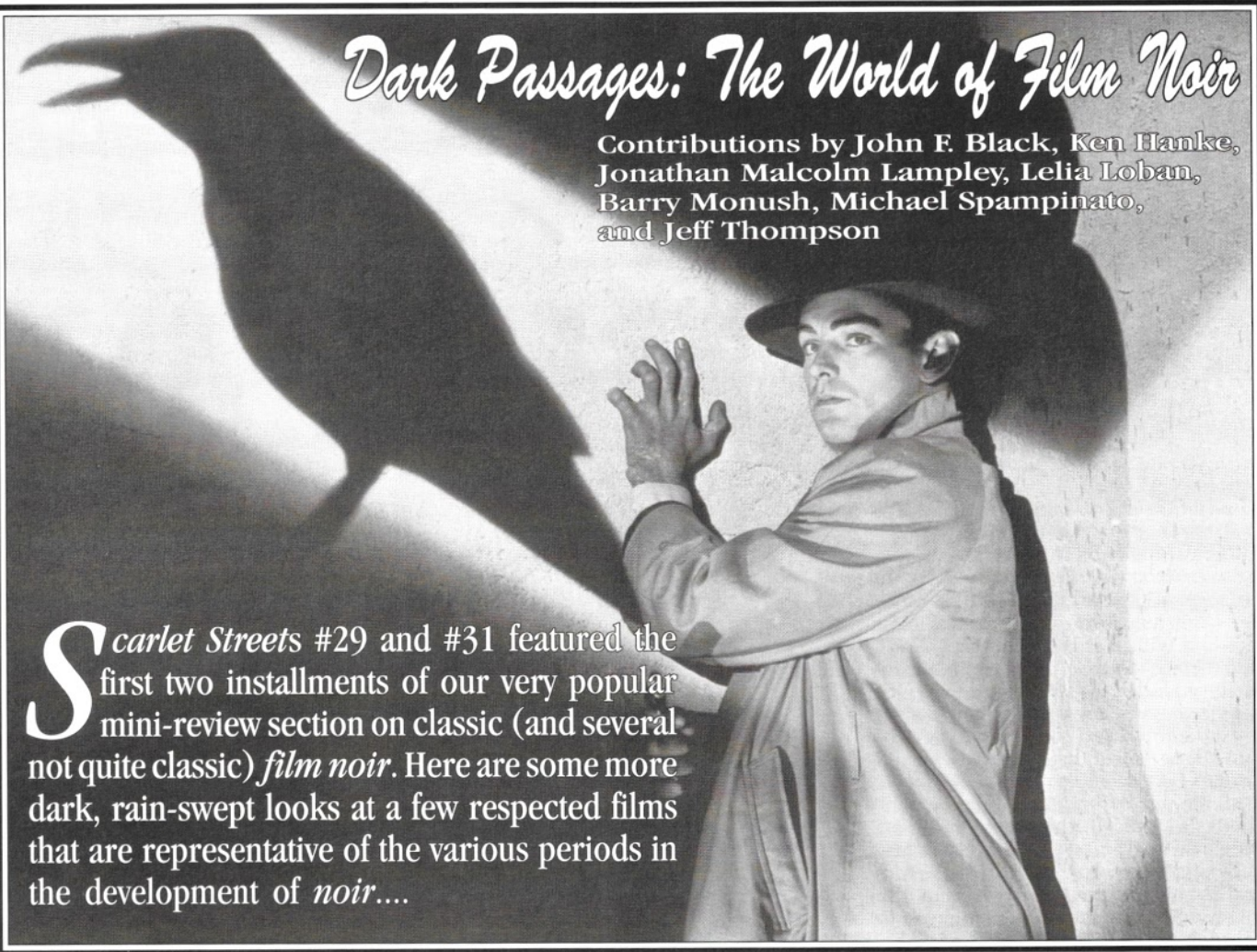
SS: Jack the Ripper.

BC: Well, all this horrible crime happening sort of over there and out of the way, but we've always got Sherlock Holmes to help us sort it out. Of course, that's not on accurate rendition of what Victorian London was like. It certainly wasn't like that for the people who couldn't support themselves and lived in poverty. But the two central characters are the main thing, the relationship between the two men who come together to make up a whole character between them. You've got John Watson, who's the heart, and Sherlock Holmes, who's the head. That's a wonderful thing, that sense of a close partnership, a close relationship. What could possibly be more appealing?

Attention, all Sherlock Holmes fanatics! Don't dare miss future issues of *Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror* and exclusive interviews with British television Holmes actor Douglas Wilmer and scriptwriter Charles Edward Pogue!

Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir

Contributions by John F. Black, Ken Hanke, Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, Lelia Loban, Barry Monush, Michael Spampinato, and Jeff Thompson



Scarlet Streets #29 and #31 featured the first two installments of our very popular mini-review section on classic (and several not quite classic) *film noir*. Here are some more dark, rain-swept looks at a few respected films that are representative of the various periods in the development of *noir*....

SIDE STREET (1950)

Anthony Mann's *SIDE STREET* opens with a panoramic view of New York's majestic skyscrapers, interspersed with images of Park Avenue and Central Park. But most of the film's characters and events are confined to the city's underbelly, a dim environment of tenements, back-alleys, and 75-cents-a-night hotels.

Farley Granger stars as part-time letter carrier Joe Norson, who lives with his pregnant wife Ellen's (Cathy O'Donnell) parents in their cramped apartment. Not wanting her to deliver the baby in a charity ward, Joe steals what he believes to be \$200 from an attorney's file cabinet. When the amount proves to be \$30,000, he soul-searchingly decides to return it. But the attorney, who's involved in such sideline enterprises as blackmail and murder, sees an opportunity to implicate Joe for the crimes. He manipulates the conscience-stricken man into going on the lam.

SIDE STREET is a taut drama that tightens the noose around Joe's neck as he attempts to ascertain the lawyer's reason for declining his offer of reconciliation. His search for the truth leads him on a serpentine path through funeral parlors, beauty salons, and shady Greenwich Village cocktail lounges. Through his journey, we view the inner city of New York, the dark corners superficially obscured by the city's statuesque facade.

The film reunites leading actors Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell, who had previously enjoyed success in Nicholas Ray's *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* (1949). Granger is again cast as a spontaneous lawbreaker. He brings a haunted quality to the role of a young man who makes an error in judgment, and must then suffer the consequences. O'Donnell is more limited by her character than she was in

the earlier release, though Ellen does serve as the catalyst that compels Joe to initially commit his crime, and then to seek amends for it. But the role itself only moves her from pregnancy to young motherhood, hardly requiring her to stretch as an actress.

—John F. Black

GUN CRAZY (1949)

This Joseph H. Lewis *noir* is the story of a troubled young man for whom guns simultaneously represent a vehicle for self-esteem and an instrument of dire consequences. As a lad, his prowess with firearms earned him a measure of respect from his peers. But when his obsession caused him to steal a weapon, a judge sentenced him to reform school.

Returning to town, the now grown-up Bart Tare (John Dall) encounters sharpshooting beauty Annie Laurie Starr (Peggy Cummins), whose attraction to guns is more lethal than his, in a carnival. Shortly thereafter, they marry and strike out on their own. Craving money and excitement, Annie entices Bart into committing a string of small-time robberies. Matters escalate when they holdup a bank (in the film's famous one-take sequence).

From that point, the couple lives on the run. Their lifestyle is predicated by Bart's participation in the burglaries because he loves her, while Annie prefers the power they skillfully wield together. Eventually, they are tracked down. Significantly, Bart shoots Annie as deputies approach—his only act of killing since a childhood mishap—to prevent the one he loves from taking additional lives. The lawmen then fatally shoot him.

Director Lewis has commented in interviews that he deliberately cast John Dall in the lead because Dall was a

gay man in real life. Lewis desired an actor who could innately communicate a level of sensitivity not normally required of a two-fisted *noir* protagonist. Dall doesn't play Bart as being gay. However, the character's persona stems from an identity that is at odds with his community's ideals. Even though he wishes to someday "go straight," the lure of guns and crime (and Annie's influence) is potent enough to dissuade him. Ultimately, his society punishes him for his choice of life-style. The director, in hindsight, made an astute choice in casting the leading role. Dall's character remains sympathetic to the audience, even when following his nontraditional path.

—John F. Black

WHITE HEAT (1949)

Screenwriters Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts wrote the starring role of *WHITE HEAT*, psychotic mobster Cody Jarrett, for James Cagney. He set aside his feud with Jack Warner and his disenchantment with gangster films to give one of his most intense performances. Direction by Raoul Walsh, music by Max Steiner, and cinematography by Sid Hickox help make this one of the best movies in the American film *noir* tradition. It's a thoroughly *noir* concept: whether Cody gets caught and punished or gets away with his vicious crimes, there's no chance of a happy ending.

WHITE HEAT got mixed reviews, with complaints about its 13 violent deaths. Though not very graphic by today's standards, the cold-blooded violence still looks shocking. Cody says to an enemy trapped in the closed trunk of a car, "Oh, stuffy, huh? I'll give ya a little air!" He pumps bullets through the lid of the trunk. Dark humor pervades the film's savagery. Gangsters hide out at a drive-in theater showing a gangster movie. Cody kicks the stool out from under the feet of his faithless slut of a wife, Verna (Virginia Mayo), because she disrespects his mother.

"My old man died kickin' and screamin' in the nuthouse," Cody confesses. Ma Jarrett (Margaret Wycherly), Cody's tough broad of a mother, dotes on her son, the living embodiment of then-current Freudian theories about the Oedipus complex. Suffering from brief but extremely violent headaches, Cody thrashes around, clutches his head, howls, and even hallucinates, until Ma soothes him with a sensual head rub. Cody even climbs into her lap in one bizarre scene. She reassures him that no matter how bad things seem, someday he'll end up "on top of the world."

To give himself an alibi, Cody pleads guilty to a minor crime he didn't commit in Illinois that happened at the same time as a murderous train robbery he did commit out West. Fellow prisoner "Vic Pardo," really undercover T-man Hank Fallon (Edmond O'Brien), saves Cody from a would-be assassin, then wins Cody's trust by massaging away a headache, just the way Ma would do it.

Learning that a member of his own gang has murdered Ma, Cody goes berserk in the prison mess hall. (According to biographer Patrick McGilligan, Cagney performed this harrowing mad scene in one take, extemporaneously.) Then he escapes from a straitjacket to carry out a jailbreak with "Vic" and some friends and hostages.

In scenes of a botched payroll robbery filmed at an oil refinery, splendidly lit tanks and pipes gleam as symbols of

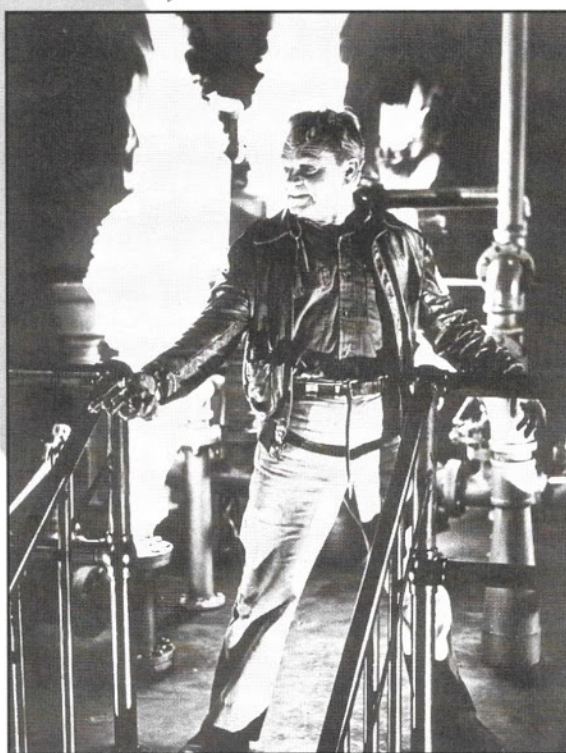
power and the potential of violence. Trapped by the Feds, Cody scrambles up to the top of a globe-shaped Horton-sphere full of flammable gas. Alone, doomed, giggling with maniacal defiance, he shouts, "Made it, Ma! Top of the world!" as his blazing gunfire ignites the gas. After half a century, *WHITE HEAT* still sizzles.

—Lelia Loban

ROPE (1948)

For years and years, Alfred Hitchcock's version of Patrick Hamilton's *ROPE* was considered little more than one of the director's more elaborate stunt films—something that was more interesting than good and that fell into the same category as Robert Montgomery's "all-subjective" *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946), in that Hitch's "one-take" technique was just as awkward as Montgomery's experiment. Upon reappraisal, *ROPE* is something more than a stunt. Indeed, it's one of the director's most successful works, and has actually proven to be more popular with audiences in reissue than some of his more highly-regarded classics.

The stated idea for the movie was to film the play in one unbroken take—or as near as film magazines on the



WHITE HEAT (1949)

camera would allow. Hitchcock himself played up the technical side of the approach, which was certainly an intriguing problem and just the sort of thing to delight the director's innate love of any technical challenge. But in making such a fuss over this aspect of the film, Hitch and subsequent critics of the film short-changed the real accomplishment of *ROPE*—the tension that resulted from the approach and the amazing preservation of the play as a theatrical (but by no means stagey) experience. This is what gives *ROPE* its unusual quality more than the use of the technique for its own sake.

Ironically, part of the tension may well have been an inadvertent result of this technique being foisted on screen actors used to working in shorter takes and here placed under tremendous pressure to deliver much longer performances. The longer a take ran, the more they had to be aware that a mistake would take them right back to its beginning.

There's a glassy-eyed intensity to the performances that seems to increase the further the actors get into a scene!

The story is pure Hitchcock *noir*—two homosexual college students (John Dall and Farley Granger), filled with half-digested notions of Nietzsche and their own "superiority" by their professor (James Stewart), murder a fellow student, stuff him in a trunk in their living room, and then proceed to use the trunk as a buffet from which to serve his family, friends, and their professor at a social gathering.

The plot is an obvious, but far from simplistic, reworking of the Leopold and Loeb case, here given an interesting psychological twist by bringing the man responsible for helping to turn these young men into murderers onto the scene. That the role of Rupert Cadell should have gone to James Stewart must have been a shock to 1948 audiences, but it gave Stewart his greatest chance to date to stretch beyond his usual light leading man status, and he came through with one of his finest performances. Stewart's playing grows with the film as he moves from vague suspicion to firmer ground to certainty and finally to the sickening re-

PAGE 56: Alan Ladd became a star for his riveting portrayal of the psychopathic killer Raven in Paramount's production of Grahame Green's *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* (1942). BELOW: *Noir* femme fatale Barbara Stanwyck, so lethal in such films as *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1944) and *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* (1946), finally met her match—the telephone company in *SORRY, WRONG NUMBER* (1948) RIGHT: John Dall was cast opposite Peggy Cummins in *GUN CRAZY* (1949) because director Joseph H. Lewis wanted a gay man in the role. PAGE 59 LEFT: A story persists that Alfred Hitchcock cast Farley Granger (picture here with Cathy O'Donnell in 1950's *SIDE STREET*) in *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN* (1951) for a similar reason—he wanted a gay actor opposite the heterosexual Robert Walker, who was playing a gay killer. PAGE 59 RIGHT: No speculation here—Granger and Dall played lovers who bump off a fellow student in Hitchcock's *ROPE* (1948).

alization of his own culpability. The concept of the role itself is daring, since it raises the question of the immense responsibility of a teacher and his impressionable students—what may be amusing and sophisticated, but wholly abstract, to a mature mind may have other, and in this case tragic, effects on more unformed ones.

Technically, the film is every bit the marvel it had to be to work. The carefully choreographed camera movements, the breakaway sets (the amazing moment where we see just exactly what we are supposed to see—and nothing else—through a swinging kitchen door), and the elaborately blocked performances are all superbly done. From this standpoint alone, the film is remarkable, but all this should be set aside after a viewing or two and *ROPE* should be examined for its other and greater accomplishments.

—Ken Hanke



THE DARK CORNER (1946)

Private eye Brad Galt (Mark Stevens) has every reason to feel paranoid: he's been framed for a murder by someone he's never even met! In the world of *THE DARK CORNER*, when someone needs his cheating wife's lover disposed of and someone to pin the crime on, any innocent man will do.

Directed in a tight, no frills manner by Henry Hathaway, with a good script by Jay Dratler and Bernard C. Schoenfeld (albeit with one annoyingly underwritten revelation at the end), this New York-set *noir* keeps its parallel story lines plunging into increasingly sinister waters until at last the principals meet in the final reel and the necessary round of bullets is pumped into the deserving party.

Galt wants to run his detective business in peace. He's got a prime secretary, Kathleen (Lucille Ball), with a nice pair of legs, an unswerving sense of loyalty, and a great way with a snappy line. But he's also got Stauffer, a mug in a white suit (William Bendix) dogging his every step. When at last he confronts his tracker, the name of Galt's unsavory ex-partner, Jardine (Kurt Kreuger), is raised. Stauffer claims it's Jardine who hired him to get Galt out of the way, prompting the shamus to explain to Kathleen how he took the wrap for a fatal accident caused by Jardine, who was running a blackmailing racket on the side.

Cut to the charmed world of wealthy art dealer Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb), who has a token younger bride (Cathy Downs) he adores and all of New York society ("a nauseating mixture of Park Avenue and Broadway," as he calls it) beckoning for his attention. He also has a close "friend" in the very same Jardine, who happens to be bedding Cathcart's wife on the side. When Cathcart finds out, there is no telling what steps he'll take to get revenge, even if it means putting the unsuspecting Galt into hot water.

THE DARK CORNER is worth a look if only for the pleasure of seeing polar opposites Clifton Webb and William Bendix play off of one another. Bendix, as expected, is crude, blunt, slow-witted, and nasty enough to threaten a little girl with an annoying habit of playing her slide whistle in his apartment building. Webb, of course, was the screen's greatest prissy snob and he makes one sit up with anticipation each time he enters a room, wondering what epigram or acerbic bon mot he'll put his peerless spin on. ("The enjoyment of art," he proclaims, "is the only remaining ecstasy that is neither immoral or illegal.") But Webb displays his vulnerable side as well, as Cathcart confronts the adulterous bride he's lost to a younger man, reminding her that "Love is not the exclusive province of adolescence, my dear. It's a heart ailment that strikes all age groups."

Romance-wise, Galt has it better. Despite the fact that he's a dick who's never even heard of Nick Charles, Kathleen flips for him, going so far as to wash the blood off



an incriminating fire iron to save his neck. Working at Fox on loan from MGM, Lucille Ball fits into the *noir* world with ease, reminding us that before she made comedy her domain she was a good-looking lady with a tart delivery, capable of playing drama with the best of them. She coaxes some sparks out of Mark Stevens, a fairly colorless actor, who plays his part in a standard tough guy fashion—no more, no less.

Ball, alas, doesn't share a single scene with Webb who, in an echo of his previous film, *LAURA*, plays a man quite taken with a painting of a lovely girl (in this case, one who resembles his wife). Cathcart is a cool creature, who has no qualms about pushing someone out of a window, then calmly keeping a dental appointment in the same building.

Then, again, a visit with a dentist might be the Production Code's cruelest way of inflicting punishment on the guilty.

—Barry Monush

THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS (1944)

The first (and arguably the best) film specifically designed as a vehicle for Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre (somewhat absurdly billed fourth, under Greenstreet, Zachary Scott, and Faye Emerson) is a *noir* delight, thanks largely to the playing of the leads and a screenplay by Frank Gruber that is tailored to their specific talents. Based on the 1937 novel, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, by Eric Ambler, the story line and structure very much resembles (indeed, one supposes that the Colonel Haki of this film is the same character from the previous film) that of the 1942 Norman Foster/Orson Welles adaptation of Ambler's *Journey into Fear* (1937)—an innocent man drawn into an amazingly convoluted web of intrigue, told largely in a kind of flashback format. In the case of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, the flashback is one long piece up until the climax. In *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS*, it is a layered series of flashbacks within a framing story. Ironically—and possibly not accidentally—these flashbacks, which flesh out the character of the amoral and even sociopathic Dimitrios Makropoulos (Zachary Scott), give the film something of the flavor of *CITIZEN KANE* (1941), rethought as a thriller! Unfortunately, while the film's structure is more complex and intriguing than that of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, Jean Negulesco isn't quite up to the level of atmosphere generated by Messrs. Foster and Welles (though Welles always claimed the direction of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR* was solely Foster's work). This aspect aside, *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS* is a little gem of a film.

The story line involves mystery writer Cornelius Latimer Leyden (Lorre) who, on a whim, accompanies his devoted fan, Colonel Haki (Kurt Katch), to view the body of Dimitrios Makropoulos, which has been discovered on the beach in Istanbul. "Do you know, I have never seen a dead



man—not even in a mortuary," confesses the man for whom murder and mayhem are a literary way of life. Not surprisingly, his taste for the real thing—at least as concerns corpses—is soon satisfied, but not his interest in Makropoulos, whose story so fascinates Leyden that he sets off to follow the trail of the dead man. In his quest, he inadvertently finds himself teamed with the enigmatic Mr. Peters (Greenstreet), who preys on Leyden's basic goodwill with the catchphrase, "How little kindness there is in the world today." Peters, however, is not to be trifled with, as Leyden learns when he returns to find the fellow ransacking his hotel room. "This is most awkward. I didn't expect you back so soon," admits Peters, holding his "friend" at bay with a pistol. "Oh, I can see that," Leyden blandly counters. Peters offers a deal: that he will put him onto Dimitrios' trail in exchange for whatever information Leyden has about the dead villain, even while not entirely taking the writer at face value. ("Your passport describes you as a writer, but that is a very elastic term.") Armed with a letter of introduction, Leyden is able to gain access to Dimitrios' past, only to find that he is involved in far more than he bargained for when it turns out that he is part of Peters' elaborate blackmail scheme. (Since the plot has its share of whodunit-style surprises, it would be a shame to divulge the exact nature of the latter part of the film.)

THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS is unusual for a *film noir* in that it presents Zachary Scott as a kind of *homme fatale* in place of the usual *femme fatale*. Indeed, the women in the film—all of whom are pretty much on the fringe (despite Faye Emerson's high billing)—tend to be victimized by Dimitrios, or are victims by proxy. Though a limited performer, Scott conveys the character's icy charm and it is not at all hard to believe that Dimitrios is completely devoid of all vestiges of a conscience.

When all is said and done, however, the film is first and foremost a superb and superbly tailored vehicle for Greenstreet and Lorre. They are brilliant throughout, playing off each other with the same chemistry they had evidenced in their first teaming in 1941's *THE MALTESE FALCON*. (*DIMITRIOS* cleverly reworks several key elements from that film, including a couple of delicious bits in which Lorre is allowed to "lose it" and go completely over the top in his distinctive manner.) As Greenstreet never tires of informing us, there may well be too little kindness in the world, but *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS* is undoubtedly a kindness of the finest stripe for film lovers.

—Ken Hanke

PITFALL (1948)

Andre de Toth's *PITFALL* is an unusual *film noir* depiction of malaise within American suburbia. Dick Powell enacts insurance salesman John Forbes, who seems to have it all: a



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Cut to the charmed world of wealthy art dealer Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb), who has a token younger bride (Cathy Downs) he adores and all of New York society ("a nauseating mixture of Park Avenue and Broadway," as he calls it) beckoning for his attention. He also has a close "friend" in the very same Jardine, who happens to be bedding Cathcart's wife on the side. When Cathcart finds out, there is no telling what steps he'll take to get revenge, even if it means putting the unsuspecting Galt into hot water.

THE DARK CORNER is worth a look if only for the pleasure of seeing polar opposites Clifton Webb and William Bendix play off of one another. Bendix, as expected, is crude, blunt, slow-witted, and nasty enough to threaten a little girl with an annoying habit of playing her slide whistle in his apartment building. Webb, of course, was the screen's greatest prissy snob and he makes one sit up with anticipation each time he enters a room, wondering what epigram or acerbic bon mot he'll put his peerless spin on. ("The enjoyment of art," he proclaims, "is the only remaining ecstasy that is neither immoral or illegal.") But Webb displays his vulnerable side as well, as Cathcart confronts the adulterous bride he's lost to a younger man, reminding her that "Love is not the exclusive province of adolescence, my dear. It's a heart ailment that strikes all age groups."

Romance-wise, Galt has it better. Despite the fact that he's a dick who's never even heard of Nick Charles, Kathleen flips for him, going so far as to wash the blood off





an incriminating fire iron to save his neck. Working at Fox on loan from MGM, Lucille Ball fits into the *noir* world with ease, reminding us that before she made comedy her domain she was a good-looking lady with a tart delivery, capable of playing drama with the best of them. She coaxes some sparks out of Mark Stevens, a fairly colorless actor, who plays his part in a standard tough guy fashion—no more, no less.

Ball, alas, doesn't share a single scene with Webb who, in an echo of his previous film, *LAURA*, plays a man quite taken with a painting of a lovely girl (in this case, one who resembles his wife). Cathcart is a cool creature, who has no qualms about pushing someone out of a window, then calmly keeping a dental appointment in the same building.

Then, again, a visit with a dentist might be the Production Code's cruelest way of inflicting punishment on the guilty.

—Barry Monush

THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS (1944)

The first (and arguably the best) film specifically designed as a vehicle for Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre (somewhat absurdly billed fourth, under Greenstreet, Zachary Scott, and Faye Emerson) is a *noir* delight, thanks largely to the playing of the leads and a screenplay by Frank Gruber that is tailored to their specific talents. Based on the 1937 novel, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, by Eric Ambler, the story line and structure very much resembles (indeed, one supposes that the Colonel Haki of this film is the same character from the previous film) that of the 1942 Norman Foster/Orson Welles adaptation of Ambler's *Journey into Fear* (19XX)—an innocent man drawn into an amazingly convoluted web of intrigue, told largely in a kind of flashback format. In the case of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, the flashback is one long piece up until the climax. In *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS*, it is a layered series of flashbacks within a framing story. Ironically—and possibly not accidentally—these flashbacks, which flesh out the character of the amoral and even sociopathic Dimitrios Makropolous (Zachary Scott), give the film something of the flavor of *CITIZEN KANE* (1941), rethought as a thriller! Unfortunately, while the film's structure is more complex and intriguing than that of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, Jean Negulesco isn't quite up to the level of atmosphere generated by Messrs. Foster and Welles (though Welles always claimed the direction of *JOURNEY INTO FEAR* was solely Foster's work). This aspect aside, *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS* is a little gem of a film.

The story line involves mystery writer Cornelius Latimer Leyden (Lorre) who, on a whim, accompanies his devoted fan, Colonel Haki (Kurt Katch), to view the body of Dimitrios Makropolous, which has been discovered on the beach in Istanbul. "Do you know, I have never seen a dead



man—not even in a mortuary," confesses the man for whom murder and mayhem are a literary way of life. Not surprisingly, his taste for the real thing—at least as concerns corpses—is soon satisfied, but not his interest in Makropolous, whose story so fascinates Leyden that he sets off to follow the trail of the dead man. In his quest, he inadvertently finds himself teamed with the enigmatic Mr. Peters (Greenstreet), who preys on Leyden's basic goodwill with the catchphrase, "How little kindness there is in the world today." Peters, however, is not to be trifled with, as Leyden learns when he returns to find the fellow ransacking his hotel room. "This is most awkward. I didn't expect you back so soon," admits Peters, holding his "friend" at bay with a pistol. "Oh, I can see that," Leyden blandly counters. Peters offers a deal: that he will put him onto Dimitrios' trail in exchange for whatever information Leyden has about the dead villain, even while not entirely taking the writer at face value. ("Your passport describes you as a writer, but that is a very elastic term.") Armed with a letter of introduction, Leyden is able to gain access to Dimitrios' past, only to find that he is involved in far more than he bargained for when it turns out that he is part of Peters' elaborate blackmail scheme. (Since the plot has its share of whodunit-style surprises, it would be a shame to divulge the exact nature of the latter part of the film.)

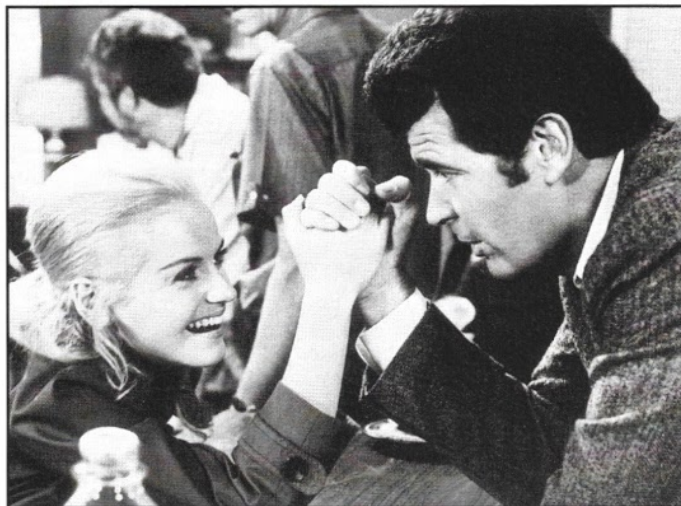
THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS is unusual for a *film noir* in that it presents Zachary Scott as a kind of *homme fatale* in place of the usual *femme fatale*. Indeed, the women in the film—all of whom are pretty much on the fringe (despite Faye Emerson's high billing)—tend to be victimized by Dimitrios, or are victims by proxy. Though a limited performer, Scott conveys the character's icy charm and it is not at all hard to believe that Dimitrios is completely devoid of all vestiges of a conscience.

When all is said and done, however, the film is first and foremost a superb and superbly tailored vehicle for Greenstreet and Lorre. They are brilliant throughout, playing off each other with the same chemistry they had evidenced in their first teaming in 1941's *THE MALTESE FALCON*. (*DIMITRIOS* cleverly reworks several key elements from that film, including a couple of delicious bits in which Lorre is allowed to "lose it" and go completely over the top in his distinctive manner.) As Greenstreet never tires of informing us, there may well be too little kindness in the world, but *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS* is undoubtedly a kindness of the finest stripe for film lovers.

—Ken Hanke

PITFALL (1948)

Andre de Toth's *PITFALL* is an unusual *film noir* depiction of malaise within American suburbia. Dick Powell enacts insurance salesman John Forbes, who seems to have it all: a



LEFT: The private eye is Mark Stevens. The secretary is a surprising (and surprisingly effective) Lucille Ball. The film is **THE DARK CORNER** (1946). **RIGHT:** The film was flawed, but James Garner was one of the better Philip Marlowes in **MARLOWE** (1969). Sharon Farrell was *The Little Sister* of Raymond Chandler's 1949 novel.

cozy Santa Monica house, a dutiful high school sweetheart wife, Sue (Jane Wyatt); a loving son, Tommy (Jimmy Hunt, who would experience further parental difficulties in 1953's *INVADERS FROM MARS*); as well as gainful employment. Still, the very predictability of Forbes' existence has become irksome to him. An alluring but troubled department store model, Mona Stevens (Lizabeth Scott), provides him with an uncharacteristic opportunity for an overnight fling. Unfortunately, obsessed private detective MacDonald (Raymond Burr), who's a contentious associate of Forbes, covets her as well. When Mona rebuffs the detective's advances, MacDonald drags Forbes into an escalating rivalry.

PITFALL is distinctive for its tone of controlled civility. Forbes appears satisfied with his life-style, even when allowing himself to question it. He maintains a tenuous working relationship with MacDonald, an uneasy alliance that eventually fragments when he attempts to discourage the detective from stalking the young woman. Forbes continues to speak with Mona occasionally, out of a sense of guilt, but always maneuvers to keep her at a safe distance from his family. None of these people are truly happy, but they mask their dissatisfaction with deadpan ambivalence. Their inopportune domestic triangle provides each of them with something which they were only vaguely aware of lacking. Deception, violence, and finally murder result from Forbes' 24 hours of indiscretion, yet the actors rarely raise their voices throughout these events, keeping their raw emotions below the surface.

The film's final scene employs this well-crafted tone of civility to provide a memorably understated resolution. Forbes and his wife discuss their marriage, deciding to try to preserve the relationship. The conversation could have been performed in an optimistic, life-affirming manner. But the actors practically speak through clenched teeth, barely able to suppress their characters' now open wounds. It isn't the dialogue that conveys the threat to their American dream, but the deadened demeanor which accompanies their pronouncements for the future.

—John F. Black

KEY LARGO (1948)

In *KEY LARGO*, directed by John Huston, it's *noir* guys versus good guys in the Florida Keys. Discharged from the battlefields of World War II, the world-weary Major Frank McCloud (Humphrey Bogart) arrives to pay respects to the widow and the father of a soldier killed in Italy under his command. The father, James Temple (Lionel Barrymore), owns the Largo Hotel, an Art Deco resort that's seen better days. So has its owner, obese and sick-looking in his wheel-

chair. Lauren Bacall plays Temple's gorgeous daughter-in-law, Nora.

Gangsters have blown into town, too, just ahead of a hurricane. They intend to exchange counterfeit dough for real cash, party a bit, and clear out, but the storm messes up these plans. Cops start nosing around. Hunkered down in the hotel to wait out the weather, the *noir* guys take the good guys hostage.

The script, by Richard Brooks and John Huston, gives interesting personalities even to minor characters, but the best lines go to the gangsters, led by Johnny Rocco (Edward G. Robinson). In contrast to McCloud's service to his country, Rocco brags that he's been deported and that he's on the Public Enemies list. He knows only one kind of relationship with women: sick. In a scene that's silent except for Max Steiner's menacing musical score, Rocco takes Nora aside, holds her arms so she can't slap or get away, and whispers something, apparently a sexual suggestion, so disgusting that she spits in his face. Her courageous father taunts Rocco as McCloud leads Nora away. Rocco backs off when "wiseguy" McCloud points out that, if Rocco killed Nora, he'd have to kill all these witnesses, too.

Claire Trevor won an Oscar as has-been lounge singer Gay Dorn, reduced to begging her sadistic boyfriend for a drink. Yeah, Rocco says, if she'll sing for it. Trevor manages to give the impression that, before she drank her voice to bits, Gay really could sing, as she stumbles through a pathetic, unaccompanied blues number about (fittingly enough) a mean man. Then Rocco refuses her the drink anyway, because, "You were rotten." Ain't it the truth! Giving booze to a drunk wouldn't pass as heroic in any other kind of film, but Nora watches with admiration as McCloud defies Rocco and fetches Gay the drink. The growing storm distracts Rocco's rage. Faced with Mother Nature, the mobster is a coward.

In the final scenes, McCloud risks his own life to draw the gangsters away from his newfound friends at the hotel, as he pilots a stolen getaway boat toward Cuba. An avid boater in real life, Bogart looks at home in this role as he takes on the crooks in a game of ship's cat versus dirty rats. Maybe the Hollywood ending isn't quite *noir*. Call this one a half-*noir*, but it's full value as entertainment.

—Lelia Loban

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (1948)

The classic period of *film noir* is bookended by *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) and *TOUCH OF EVIL* (1958), the two greatest cinematic achievements of legendary auteur Orson Welles. It is therefore unsurprising to find another *noirish* gem

helmed by Welles right in the middle of this period: *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI*. Originally conceived as a vehicle for Rita Hayworth (at the time of production Mrs. Orson Welles, although the relationship was strained), ultimately the film really spotlights the technical mastery of Orson Welles himself.

Michael O'Hara (Welles), an apparently unremarkable Irish sailor, saves Elsa Bannister (Hayworth) from a mugging in Central Park. Smitten by the lovely Elsa (Hayworth's famous raven tresses were sheared and dyed blonde for the part), Michael is dismayed to learn she is married to a famous but crippled criminal attorney, Arthur Bannister (Everett Sloane in a role that echoes some of Lon Chaney Sr.'s more grotesque characterizations). Elsa offers Michael a job on her yacht, but he refuses—until Bannister himself persuades the sailor to join the leisurely Caribbean cruise.

Once aboard the yacht, Michael regrets his decision. Bannister is a sadistic drunk who incessantly taunts his wife and employees, apparently a reaction to his physical disabilities. The attraction between Elsa and Michael becomes increasingly difficult to resist—and increasingly obvious to everyone around them. But the most trouble stems from George Grisby (Glenn Anders), Bannister's law partner, a sarcastic and annoyingly loud snoop who offers Michael \$5,000 to commit murder. Startled by the proposal, Michael is even more dismayed to learn the intended victim: Grisby himself! Grisby apparently wants to fake his death to start a new life anonymously, and he wants Michael to sign a confession of murder. Because Grisby's body will not be recovered, he explains to the bewildered Irishman, Michael cannot be charged with murder, regardless of the confession.

Michael agrees to Grisby's scheme in order to finance his plan to run away with Elsa. Matters grow complicated when Grisby is really murdered after Michael signs the confession. Elsa persuades Michael to let her husband represent him; after all, Bannister has never lost a case. But the embittered lawyer is still in love with Elsa, and he sees the trial as an opportunity to be rid of his rival once and for all . . .

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI, based on Sherwood King's novel *If I Die Before I Wake* (1938), has a lot going for it. For what would be his last romantic lead, Welles slimmed down considerably, reminding audiences once again that he was in fact an attractive man. There's real sizzle in his scenes with Hayworth, who gives one of her best performances ever. This being *film noir*, Hayworth turns out to be a femme fatale; her lethal combination of beauty and greed place her in the top rank of movie schemers. Everett Sloane imbues Bannister with elements of tragedy and pathos, but he never loses sight of the fact that this is one seriously unstable lawyer—a man crazy enough to risk his reputation and his life to destroy his wife's lover. Still, the most memorable performance belongs to Glenn Anders, who makes Grisby irritating, humorous, and frightening all at the same time, thanks largely to an odd, high-pitched emphasis on certain words and phrases. Trivia buffs take note: Grisby's insistence on referring to Michael as "fella" is an in-joke on Welles' part. It is a jab at future Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, who had a habit of calling Welles "fella" when the two men were trying to make

IT'S ALL TRUE in Brazil a few years earlier. Welles blamed Rockefeller for the project's failure, a failure that contributed to Welles' reputation as a difficult filmmaker.

The film contains many great sequences, including the bizarre, chaotic trial scene in which Bannister, called as a witness by the prosecution, must cross-examine himself. Fleeing from the authorities, Michael attempts to hide in a crowded theater; unfortunately, he chooses a venue where a Chinese acting troupe is performing, therefore being totally conspicuous as the only Caucasian in the place! Of course, the film's most famous scene is the climax, set in a hall of mirrors. Here Elsa and Bannister have their final confrontation, their blazing pistols shattering the funhouse glass. The mirrors reflect the twisted inner selves of the Bannisters, and the scene has been copied and parodied frequently over the years, most notably in the Woody Allen comedy *MANHATTAN MURDER MYSTERY* (1993). Although not in the same league as *CITIZEN KANE* or *TOUCH OF EVIL*—it's all just a bit over the top for works in this genre—*THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* deserves its place as a minor classic of *noir*.

—Jonathan Malcolm Lampley

THE NAKED KISS (1964)

Sam Fuller's *THE NAKED KISS* is a study of appearances and public perception. His protagonist is a prostitute, Kelly (Constance Towers), who flees from her abusive pimp. Two years later, she arrives in the suburb of Grantville. After a one-night stand with the local shamus (Anthony Eisley), she decides to forge a more respectable life for herself.

Towers finds employment as a nurse's aid. She is eventually introduced to Grant (Michael Dante), the pillar of the community and great-great grandson of the town's eponymous founder. He's a man we are led to esteem before actually encountering him. A large street banner proclaims that the Grantville Orthopaedic (sic) Medical Center is sponsoring a fashion show for handicapped children. Vintage newspaper clippings trumpet Grant's heroism during the Korean War. A citizen

relates that "His very name is a synonym for charity."

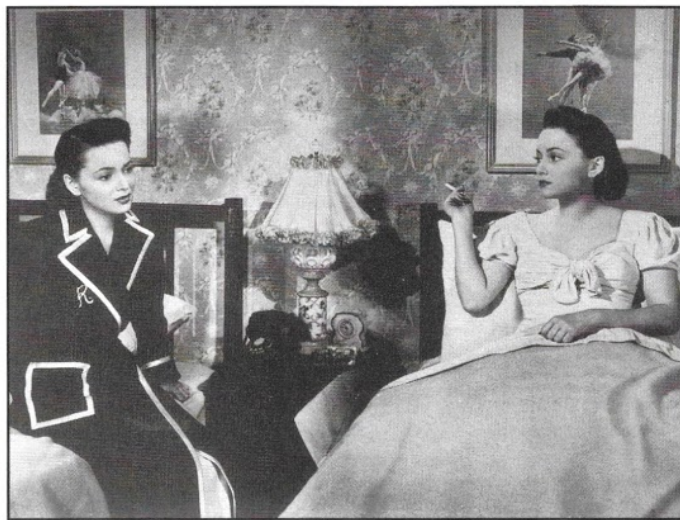
When Kelly makes his acquaintance, she (and we) are predisposed to admire him. Grant is tall and dark, impeccably dressed, and evidences a knowledge of classical music and literature. Savoir-vivre oozes from his pores, yet he's neither egotistical nor overbearing. Kelly begins a relationship with him that seems light years removed from her sordid past. When they advance to their first kiss, she's momentarily given pause by his touch. But she ill-advisedly dismisses her hesitation.

Kelly later confesses her secrets, fearing that they may drive Grant away. Instead, the effort nets her a hasty proposal of marriage. Unfortunately, she soon discovers that her abnormal past is the primary attraction for Grant. He inadvertently reveals himself to be a child molester. Fuller's staging of Kelly's discovery is tastefully mounted, but it's nevertheless a potent shock. (One wonders how 1964 theater audiences reacted to it.) Grant suggests that their intended marriage would serve to legitimize their other pleasures.

Enraged, Kelly kills him. In the days that follow, she comes to realize that true respectability isn't accurately measured by the public's perception of an individual



PITFALL (1948)



LEFT: No other *film noir* murder was quite as heartless as the drowning of her crippled brother-in-law (Darryl Hickman) by Ellen Berent (Gene Tierney) in *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (1945). Cornel Wilde played husband Richard, with Kay Riley as the nurse. **RIGHT:** It's Joan Fontaine's worse nightmare—two Olivia de Havillands in one movie. The film is *THE DARK MIRROR* (1946), one of those good twin/evil twin thrillers.

(mirroring her own resolution of her past). Though eventually exonerated, she chooses to journey elsewhere. Grantville turned out to be the kind of town that would banish the vice of prostitution "across the river" into another state, but remains incapable of protecting its most vulnerable inhabitants from its upper echelon.

On a first viewing of *THE NAKED KISS*, Grant looks to be benevolent and debonair. Dark hints about his true character, provided by Fuller, don't quite register with us. But on subsequent unspoolings, his performance projects a contradictory image. He seems pasty-faced, smug, even effete in appearance. This contrast between our first and later impressions is a credit to the actor and his director.

—John F. Black

THE KILLING (1956)

Stanley Kubrick's *THE KILLING* is a deconstructive study of an intricate racetrack robbery. Sterling Hayden stars as Johnny Clay, an ex-con who recruits an assortment of specialists to pull off the heist. His handpicked crew includes a quirky track cashier, George Peatty (Elisha Cook Jr.); a crooked cop, Randy Kennan (Ted de Corsia); an abrasive sharpshooter, Nikki Arane (Timothy Carey); and a part-time wrestler, Maurice Oboukhoff (Kola Kwarian). Although Johnny has apparently accounted for every detail in his strategy, he has ignored the dynamics of George's strained marriage. The trumpy wife, Sherry (Marie Windsor), sees an opportunity to double cross the perpetrators, foiling their "perfect crime."

THE KILLING utilizes a narrative technique that differentiates it from its *noir* brethren. The major set piece, the robbery itself, is approached from overlapping points of view. We witness one character's role in the impending burglary, before backtracking to an earlier part of the day. At that point, we follow another character as he positions himself for the nearing heist. The technique repeats itself again, as we switch to a third man carrying out his instructions. The cumulative effect is to delineate each participant's importance to the scheme. This juxtapositioning reveals the precision with which the plan must be executed.

Director Kubrick is often credited for the unconventional filmic approach. However, the source material (the novel *Clean Break*, by Lionel White) actually presents the progression of events in much the same manner. Kubrick *does* deserve praise for adhering to the book's structure, rather than simplifying it for his audience. His employment of pulp mystery writer Jim Thompson for the dialogue is another inspired touch. Thompson himself was no stranger

to unpaid bills and feelings of disillusionment. Drawing from his own experiences enabled the author to contribute a hard-edged sense of unfulfillment and desperation to the characters. The nuanced collaboration of the young, experimental Kubrick and the embittered Thompson resulted in this memorable if late entry in the *noir* canon.

—John F. Black

NIGHT AND THE CITY (1950)

With London as its atypical backdrop, *NIGHT AND THE CITY* already stands out among the postwar *noirs*. However, this adaptation of Gerald Kersch's 1938 novel had not been spoken of much with the passing years until its studio, 20th Century Fox, decided to do an American-set update with Robert De Niro in 1992.

The original 1950 version, atmospherically directed by Jules Dassin shortly after his triumph with *THE NAKED CITY* (1948), had not only faded off most radar screens but wasn't particularly well-liked by some critics of its days, eliciting an outright pan from *The New York Times*. In truth, this gripping and grim voyage into the British underworld stands the test of time and, in startling contrast to the rosy endings one usually associates with the studio era, offers a bleak and hopeless climax that was eschewed for a more optimistic one in the remake.

Brilliantly shot on location, the film begins most appropriately with protagonist Harry Fabian (Richard Widmark) on the run through the darkened streets of London. As we find out, this is not an uncommon situation for the small-time hustler and nightclub tout with a trail of failed get-rich-quick schemes behind him and more conned enemies than he can count. Harry has energy, confidence, and ideas by the dozen, but a self-destructive streak when it comes to execution. This being Richard Widmark, a rare star who could segue from hero to heel in the same movie, Harry is both underdog and bad guy as well, a complex approach that also extends to several of the movie's colorful array of supporting characters.

Running the club for which Harry scrounges for customers is the beady-eyed, blubbery Phil Nosseross (Francis L. Sullivan), who has little fondness for Harry and is happy to see his plans thwarted at any cost. Nosseross has good reason to despise the weaselly Harry, suspecting him of seducing his wife, Helen (Googie Withers in an edgy, blistering performance). Helen foolishly puts her trust in Harry, hoping he can provide her with her own club license so she can get away from the spouse she can no longer stand. This plan creates havoc for Helen and eventual destruction for

Nosseross, both of whom wind up eliciting unexpected audience sympathy as we begin to savor Harry's downfall ourselves.

Similarly, there is a deeper side to Harry's nemesis, Kristo, a shark-like wrestling promoter played with his usual finely-tuned glare by Herbert Lom. When Harry decides to muscle in on Kristo's territory by promoting a hot young wrestler, using the more respectable Greco-Roman version of the sport, he evokes Kristo's ire. To make matters worse, Harry entices Kristo's former-pro wrestler dad (former pro-wrestler Stanislaus Zbyszko), a burly, bald-headed Greek of great dignity, to be his business partner, causing an unwanted rift between father and son. As Kristo sees his poor old dad taken in by Harry, who he knows is a thoughtless slug who will eventually do him wrong, it brings out a compassionate side to his character. Once tragedy occurs, audience alliance falls to Kristo.

Of special note is an impromptu bout—one of the more intense and amazing scuffles ever put on film—between 70-year-old Zbyszko and Mike Mazurki as Kristo's prize grappler. (Mazurki had also wrestled prior to becoming one of the screen's more distinctive heavies.)

If there are any qualms about *NIGHT AND THE CITY*, they likely stem from Gene Tierney aficionados who are surprised to see just how tiny her role is given her high billing. That said and done, Tierney is still quite effective in her few moments, providing a moral backbone to the story as the American outsider who does not fit into a world of deception, manipulation, and lies—created, ironically, by her compatriot and lover, Harry Fabian.

—Barry Monush

MARLOWE (1969)

A clever adaptation of Raymond Chandler's 1949 novel *The Little Sister*, *MARLOWE* features James Garner's interpretation of private investigator Phillip Marlowe. Marlowe's search for a missing person intensifies as two peripheral characters are stabbed to death with an ice pick. His case is further convoluted by television personality Mavis Wald (Gayle Hunnicutt, changed from a movie star in the book), her gangster boyfriend, Sonny Steelgrave (H.M. Wynant); and her high-strung younger sibling, Orfamay Quest (Sharon Farrell). As always, the sleuth juggles blackmail, red herrings, and murder in his dogged pursuit of the truth.

Produced in the late sixties, Paul Bogart's *MARLOWE* shoehorns the venerable investigator into that comparatively modern era. His trail begins at The Ultimate Pad, a hippie haven for disenfranchised society dropouts (one of whom dismisses Garner as representing "the fuzz"). The then-contemporary setting provides an amusing contrast with the black-and-white *film noir* classics of the forties. Times have changed, symbolized by Marlowe's sharing office space with a gay cosmetologist (Christopher Cary) and battling a kung-fu fighter henchman played by up-and-coming Bruce Lee.

As portrayed by James Garner, however, the Marlowe character never seems to be a fish out of water. The actor's customary unflappable persona is a good fit for the bantering detective. Garner blazes no new trails in his enactment, but effortlessly suggests the man's square-jawed determination. He's always entertaining, even though one rarely be-

lieves him to be in actual danger. Surprisingly, supporting actor Kenneth Tobey is given the film's best one-liner. Portraying a police detective who's punched in the face by another lawman while maneuvering to restrain Marlowe, Tobey quips, "Yeah, it's a new type of third degree—the police beat the hell out of each other, and the suspect cracks up from the agony of watching."

Chandler purists who considered Garner a shade too "mod" or hip for the Marlowe role had a greater shock in store. Robert Altman's *THE LONG GOODBYE* (1973) would present Elliott Gould's unique take on the protagonist—a disheveled loser of a gumshoe far too burned out to create spontaneous witticisms about his affairs. In retrospect, Garner offered a faithful updating of the sleuth, whereas Gould implied a denunciation of the character's image.

—John F. Black

SORRY, WRONG NUMBER (1948)

Barbara Stanwyck received an Oscar nomination as Leona Stevenson in *SORRY, WRONG NUMBER*, a movie that fo-

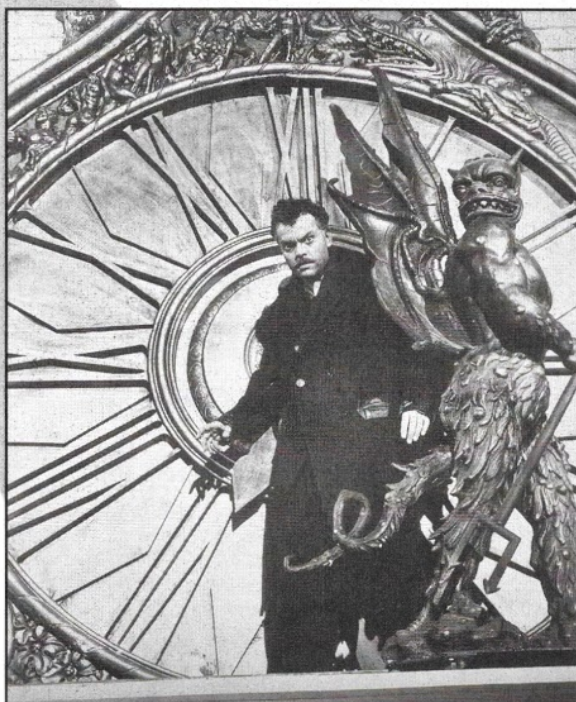
cuses on the phone so intensely that it almost becomes a character. Author Lucille Fletcher (who based her screenplay on her radio play of the same title) and director Anatole Litvak gave Stanwyck the difficult job of keeping the audience's interest as an unsympathetic leading lady. The neurotic Leona flips back and forth between spoiled rich bitch, shrieking loony, and whining, pathetic victim. It's easy to sympathize with her husband, Henry Stevenson (Burt Lancaster), a personable guy with understandable grievances. Yet the script pressures the audience to root for Leona, because being a pain in the ass isn't a capital offense.

Leona decides she's in jeopardy when a crossed-up telephone line lets her eavesdrop on a conversation she gradually starts to perceive as her husband's plot to hire a murderer to kill her for her money. The audience learns why as Leona spends the rest of the movie trying to get help that's apparently only a phone call away.

Leona married this boy from the sticks and propped him up as a miserable toady in her father's business. Henry desperately wants to find a new job with dignity, but Leona controls him with money and won't let him quit. Any lingering romantic interest between them died long ago. He always liked her money better than he liked her, while she wanted a handsome escort she could boss and belittle. It's the ideal *film noir* marriage: made in hell.

Yet the movie also has elements of classic tragedy. Henry's fatal flaws are his pride and envy. He has the talent to use that drive to become a successful businessman, but under pressure, he commits crimes for easy money that puts him at the mercy of a mobster who shakes him down. Leona's fatal flaw is greed for power. For years, she's manipulated others to get her own way, but now that she really needs help, people assume she's only playing the same old "pity me" game. For a long time, even the audience can't tell if she's really in danger, or if she's nuts enough to imagine she's the target of the overheard plot.

Despite a plot driven by a series of preposterous coincidences, the movie builds up to a suspenseful ending, as a sinister shadow of a man in a fedora hat looms against a wall outside Leona's apartment building, then sneaks slowly



THE STRANGER (1946)



up the stairs as she babbles into the phone. Detective? Savior? Murderer? The last spoken line of the film is a classic, one of the great ironic moments in *film noir*, the more so because the movie gives away every word of that line early on. Very early indeed.

—Lelia Loban

THE DARK MIRROR (1946)

Few challenges are more tempting to an actor than playing a dual role. Thanks to the always-adept split screen technique, one can face off right in the same frame with the performer one admires most. In 1946, the same year Bette Davis went one-on-one with Bette Davis in *A STOLEN LIFE*, Olivia de Havilland, who had no intention of ever appearing in the same movie with real-life sister Joan Fontaine, played her own sibling in *THE DARK MIRROR*, an independently produced feature that is more of a psychological melodrama than a suspense thriller or *noir*.

There was never much point in creating a dual role unless the contrasts are interesting, usually dictating that one twin be good, the other wicked. While Davis made sure she played the rotten sister with relish, de Havilland chose a more subtle approach, as one is edgy and jealous, the other demure and easily intimidated by the other. As a result, *THE DARK MIRROR* is acceptable fare but not as juicy as its premise might suggest.

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Meinike leads Wilson to Harper, Connecticut, where Mary Longstreet, daughter of a U.S. Supreme Court Justice (Philip Merivale), is preparing to marry Charles Rankin, a newly arrived history professor who in his spare time is repairing the long-silent clock in the church tower. At first, Wilson considers the clever Mr. Rankin (director Welles) above suspicion, but the realization of a slip, which Rankin makes over dinner, later causes Wilson to bolt upright out of his slumber. Rankin is Kindler! Simultaneously, newlywed Mary awakens from a nightmare in an atmospheric scene in which first Rankin's shadow and then Mary's shadow loom on the wall in classic *film noir* fashion. During the shadowplay, Mary explains that she had dreamed that the now-murdered Konrad Meinike had separated from his own shadow. Amidst a motif of shadows, important information has come to both Mary and Wilson in dreams. (Ultimately, the curtain line of the film is Wilson's wish, "Pleasant dreams," to Mary.)

Welles delivers an effective performance as the arrogant, cruel, obsessive Kindler while Robinson, no stranger to great *film noir* (including 1945's *SCARLET STREET*), matches Welles as the dedicated yet detached Nazi hunter. In typical *noir* fashion, Wilson calmly and matter-of-factly informs Mary's father that Kindler "may kill her." He adds, "You're shocked at my cold-bloodedness." Wilson is equally clinical in the memorable scene in which he shows

Continued on page 68





up the stairs as she babbles into the phone. Detective? Savior? Murderer? The last spoken line of the film is a classic, one of the great ironic moments in *film noir*, the more so because the movie gives away every word of that line early on. Very early indeed.

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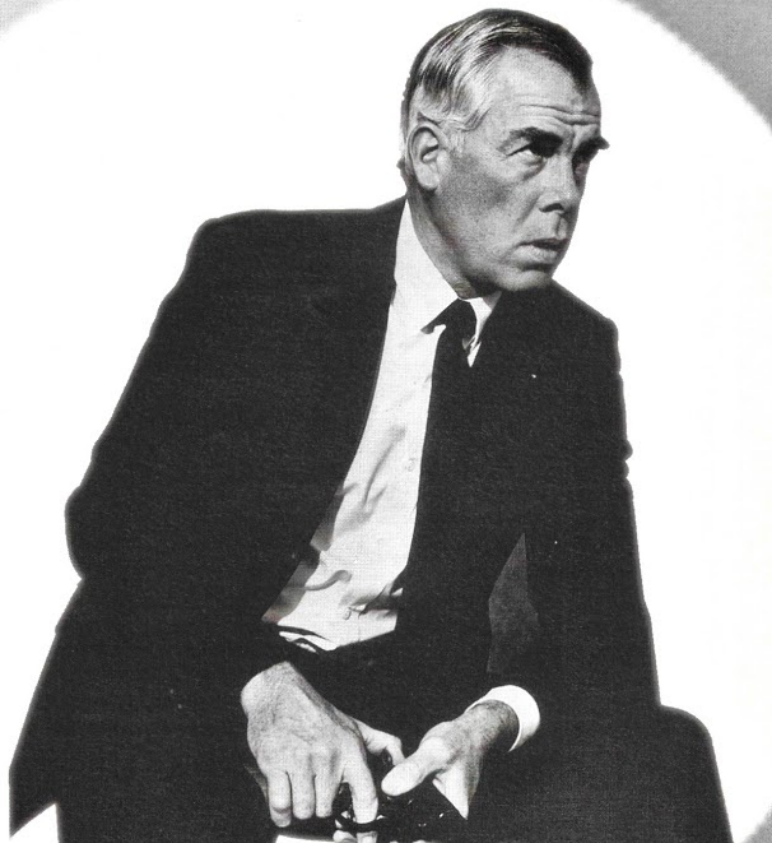
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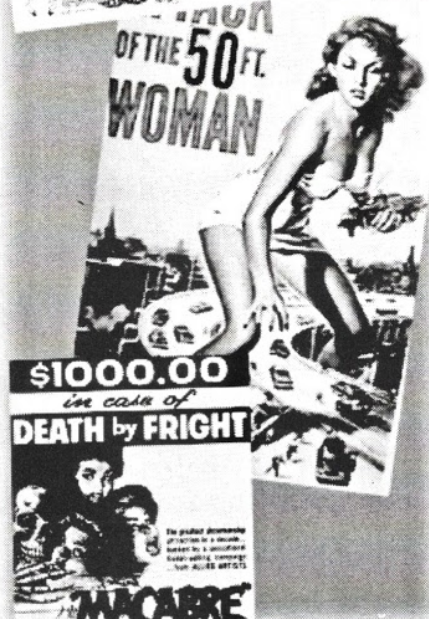
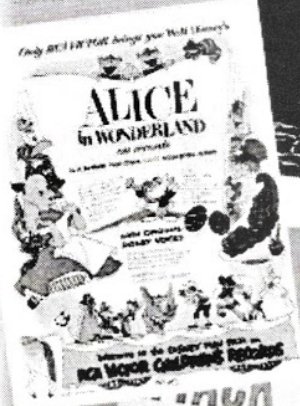
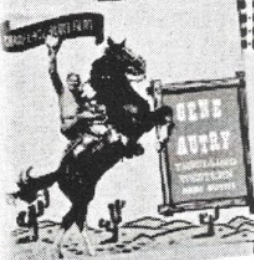
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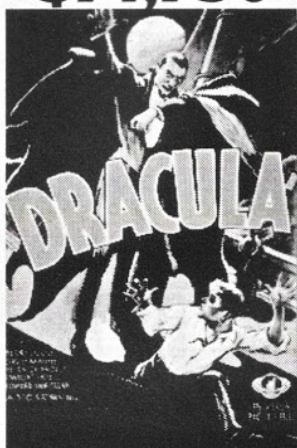
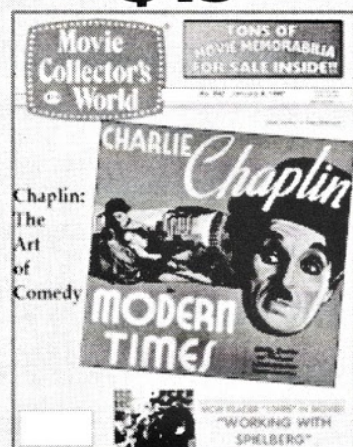
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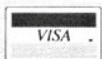
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DARK PASSAGES

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Mary and Justice Longstreet 8mm movies of Nazi gas chambers and lime pits. Mary jumps as if slapped when the movie spool reaches the end and the tail flaps against the projector.

The always dazzling Loretta Young gives an excellent performance as Mary, a woman journeying from innocence to terror. Radiating beauty and modeling lovely clothes and hairstyles, Mary begins as a happy, trusting society girl and evolves into a worried, then frightened, then terrified, then icily resolute woman. After Meirnerke is murdered, her dog Red is poisoned, her trust in her husband is shattered, and the life of her brother Noah (Richard Long of *NANNY AND THE PROFESSOR* fame) is threatened, it is the transformed, morally outraged Mary Longstreet Rankin who carries a gun to the steep, shadowy church tower at the film's melodramatic climax. The obsessive Kindler has made the huge old clock start striking the hour again after many silent years, but the relentless clanging through the film's final half hour is really tolling his own impending doom.

THE STRANGER is a superb Wellesian effort, replete with suspense, characterization, political commentary, and dashes of humor. The acting ensemble of Welles, Young, and Robinson is so dynamic that it is hard to imagine that Welles originally intended the Nazi-hunting Wilson to be a woman played by Agnes Moorehead. Think of the utterly different (and certainly feminist) slant such a drastic change would have brought to *THE STRANGER*. The ramifications of such a Moorehead performance will never be known, but what does exist on film is a memorable *film noir* with qualities that only an Orson Welles could bring to it.

—Jeff Thompson

CRISS CROSS (1949)

Returning home after a year on the road, Steve Thompson (Burt Lancaster) rediscovers his feelings for ex-wife Anna (Yvonne DeCarlo). Hoping to win her back from crime boss Slim Dundee (Dan Duryea), he proposes an armored car robbery with Dundee and his gang. With Steve employed as the armored car driver, how can it fail?

This Robert Siodmak effort has a strong *noir* look, with fine music by composer Miklós Rózsa, but lacks a strong *noir* tone. Lancaster is definitely out of place as good boy turned sort-of-bad Steve Thompson. At times it is difficult to discern if Lancaster is unbelievable in the role, or if the role itself, lacking motive and motivation, is unbelievable. Steve's suggestion to rob his armored car emerges without preface and flies in the face of what we knew of Steve's personality. Steve knows his plan will imperil family friend and coworker Pop (Griff Barnett). Having reestablished himself as the breadwinner of his family, he knows he will inevitably have to leave again, this time as a criminal. Yet we see no dilemma or pangs of conscience. Unlike Cary Grant's "nice guy" portrayal of Johnnie Aysgarth in the 1941 *noir* classic *SUSPICION*, there is no transition point to indicate Steve's moral decline.

DeCarlo does a superb job with what she is given as the fallen Anna, but again we have few motivations behind her

character. She seems the classic femme fatale: self-absorbed, greedy, plotting. You soon realize little of this comes from the character and much comes from flat statements made by others about the character. Steve's family refers to Anna in hushed tones, but we are given no real details as to why she has fallen into such obvious disgrace. The reasons why Steve and Anna divorced are glossed over in a few sentences of passionless conversation. After rekindling their relationship, in a plot point coming far out of left field, Anna tells Steve that his police friend, Pete Ramirez (Stephen McNally), threatened to send her to prison unless she left Steve alone, thus providing her the opportunity to marry Dundee. The telling rather than the showing persists.

The most fascinating aspect of the film is the execution of the armored car robbery itself, planned by booze-loving mastermind Finchley (Alan Napier, beloved butler Alfred on TV's *BATMAN*). But even here, ambiguity reigns. Steve, untrusting of the gang, requests that Anna be given the money to hold until it can be divided. With Steve driving the armored car and an unwitting Pop guarding the payroll, we are treated to a tense, exciting depiction of the robbery

from start to bungled finish. Dundee shoots Pop. Steve wounds Dundee. Dundee wounds Steve. This unfortunate juxtaposition implies that the shooting of Pop has made Steve change his mind about the robbery, but later events belie that. Dundee escapes with half the money, while Steve, himself wounded, rescues the remainder. In hospital, hailed as a hero, Steve bribes one of Dundee's men, sent to the hospital to kill Steve, to take him to where Anna is hiding with the money stolen by Dundee. His hopes of winning Anna are dashed as the film climaxes with an abrupt, unsatisfying encounter between Steve, Dundee, and Anna.

CRISS CROSS has the makings of first rate *noir*. The plot is there. The characters are in place. The acting by all is first rate. What it lacks is passion and a reason for believing.

—Michael Spampinato



THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (1948)

LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN (1945)

Based on the novel by Ben Ames Williams, *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* is a *film noir* with a dif-

ference. It bursts with vibrant colors instead of the usual *noir*ish black-and-white, and it showcases breathtaking outdoor panoramas in New Mexico, New England, and the South instead of the usual claustrophobic alleys, offices, and hotel dives of the big city. Nevertheless, *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* is a superb example of the genre. Although the film eschews most of the outward stylistic trappings of *noir*, it emphasizes all of the internal emotions and motivations characteristic of the genre at its best. Propelled by one of the ultimate "fatal women" of *noir*—Gene Tierney as the possessive, amoral Ellen—*LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* leads its viewers through disturbing tangles of jealousy, spite, fear, dread, murder, suicide, and suffering. Although the characters travel from one end of the country to another, they cannot escape their horrible interconnected fates.

Richard Harland (Cornel Wilde) is a popular novelist who has written *Time Without End*, a book which he notices Ellen Berent (Tierney) reading on a train to Jacinto, New

Continued on page 71

Book Ends

The Scarlet Street Review of Books

OPEN SECRET

David Ehrenstein

Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc. 1998

372 pages—\$25.00

David Ehrenstein's *Open Secret* is at once a brilliantly probing look at homosexuality on and offscreen in Hollywood from 1928 to 1998, and a somewhat maddening one. The book is flawlessly researched and presented with entertaining panache and enlightening insights when dealing with Hollywood's Golden Age, but somehow seems to lose both steam and focus when it comes to modern Hollywood. It isn't that the latter-day portions of the book are by any means badly done (though when dealing with today's stars and Hollywood power players there is always the inescapable sense of a kind of *National Enquirer* journalism in such matters). It is simply a combination of the fact that so much of what is being discussed in the current scene is neither very secret nor very shocking, and it lacks the sense of historical perspective that Ehrenstein so brilliantly brings into play when discussing the more closeted early years of film, the filmmaking community, and America at large. However, when the book is at the peak of its power, it is far and away the most impressively detailed and perceptive book I have yet to see on the topic.

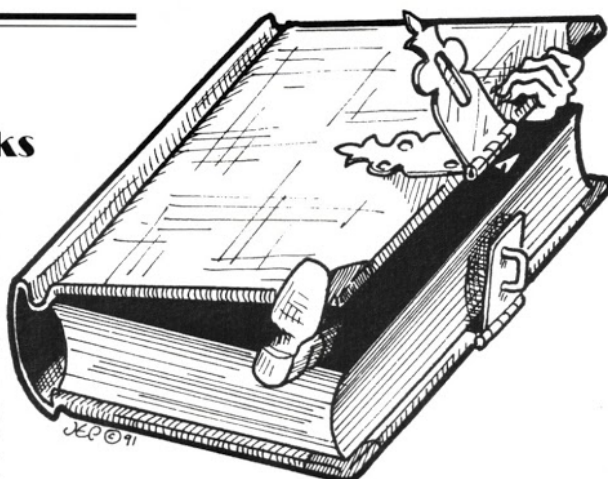
Like the very best writers on the film world, Ehrenstein is blessedly in touch

with the larger world, too, boasting a considerable frame of reference that he uses to good advantage. Far too much that is written about the movies (and far too many movies themselves, if it comes to that) seems to be by persons whose only link to the world is the movies. Once away from celluloid, they are at a loss—the real world doesn't exist, only the reel one. Ehrenstein has obviously existed in both and thereby brings a depth to his writing that is worlds away from fannish gushing and dry academia. The results are refreshing, as is his perfectly logical, yet not always chronological approach to the material. For example, it is obvious enough that James Whale is going to be dealt with early on in the book (even though Ehrenstein opens his book with a more personal exploration of the topic and approaches much in a cross-referential fashion), but rather than adhere to a linear structure, he wisely and effectively includes not just the historical Whale, but Christopher Bram's novel, *Father of Frankenstein* (1995), and Bill Condon's brilliant film version of it, *GODS AND MONSTERS* (1998). It may not be the most traditional approach, but it is the best one. It makes dramatic sense and places all the Whale

material where it properly belongs: together.

Ehrenstein never misses a turn in his recounting the classic cases of Hollywood's gay elite and how they and their studios and the press handled "Topic A" over the years. (His portrait of George Cukor is the most incisive and rewardingly candid I have ever read on the filmmaker.) Generally speaking, the book unstintingly assesses all the major gay players of the great studio era, which is to say that it bristles with the Usual Suspects—but don't expect the usual treatment. Ehrenstein is not afraid to speculate, to offer contradictory viewpoints, and, best of all, he is content in the knowledge that raising the right questions is often more important than providing a pat set of answers that probably offer only the smallest fragment of the whole picture.

Ehrenstein's perceptivity is nowhere better illustrated than in a brief early section of the book concerning Cary Grant, in which he openly takes on the question of what Grant's gayness means in assessing the actor, and notes the bizarre, al-

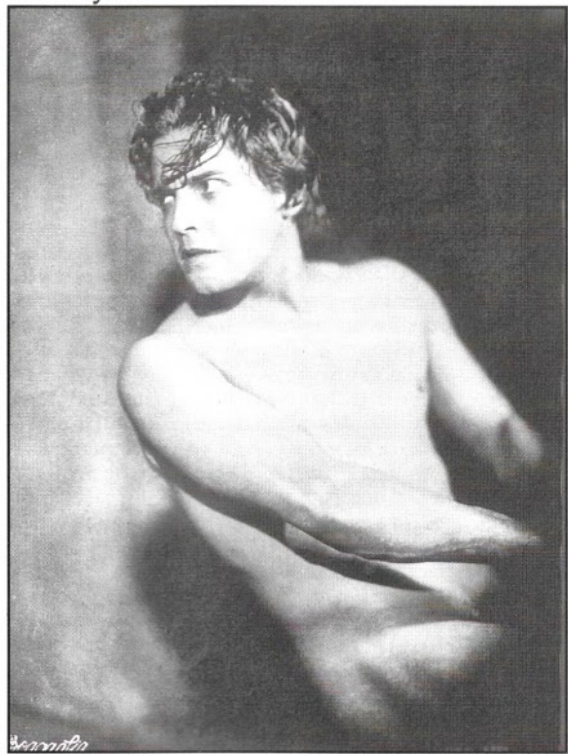


most aggressively obsessive determination of Grant biographer Graham McCann to absolutely refuse to see any gayness in Grant at all! It is Ehrenstein's laudable summation that truly sets the tone of his book and raises it many notches above numerous studies that have explored Grant's sexuality in a variety of ways. "The important thing to keep in mind—before the inevitable 'bisexual' label is whipped out to whisk him away from the scene of the homosexual 'crime'—is that the charm, the grace, the sophistication, the je-ne-sais-quoi-ness of Cary Grant is plainly and simply his gayness, whether Graham McCann likes it or not." Gay people have known this for years—just as we know that people who often think they like us in spite of our gayness really like us because of it—but Ehrenstein is the first I've seen put it into words, and he does it with grace and charm and just the right edge of anger.

If the book loses some of its impact—and it does—when dealing with more modern aspects of gay Hollywood (due to the lack of historical perspective, perhaps, or even the simple fact that personalities such as Ellen DeGeneres, Rosie O'Donnell, David Geffen, and so on just plain lack the mystique of Cary Grant, James Whale, James Dean, Rock Hudson, etc.), this by no means diminishes the book, which should be essential reading for anyone interested in the movies, in human sexuality, or just in the spectacle of life itself.

—Ken Hanke

Ramon Novarro—stunningly handsome, often nude, and gay—was one of Hollywood's greatest early movie stars.



ROAD TO BOX OFFICE

Randall G. Mielke

McFarland & Company

171 pages—\$34.50

One of my earliest filmgoing memories was *THE ROAD TO HONG KONG* (1962), which, at the age of seven, I thought was about the funniest, neatest, coolest thing I had ever seen (despite my father's protest that it just "wasn't as good as the old ones"). *ROAD TO RIO* (1947), caught not long afterwards on TV, was the first movie I ever loved. Catching up with the various other Road pictures over my childhood and adolescence only made me a diehard fan of the series, so it was with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation that I approached *Road to Box Office: The Seven Film Comedies of*



Dorothy Lamour gives Bing Crosby and Bob Hope the merry-go-run-around in *Road Number Six: ROAD TO BALI* (1952).

Crosby, Hope and Lamour. The idea of the book seemed fraught with more perils than Bing and Bob encountered in their various journeys—an entire book devoted to a mere handful of films? (Such has been done, but never with anything as lightweight as the Road pictures.) And what if the results were anything less than a celebration of the films? Could the author pull it off? The answer is yes and no and sometimes. The result is a book I very much like and am glad to have, but what I wanted—and didn't quite get—was a book that I loved and treasured.

The problem with a book, even a slim one such as this, that covers only seven films is one of scope and size. While it would have been possible for author Randall G. Mielke to devote the entire book to the Road pictures alone had he decided to wind his way down some of the films' more interesting detours, he instead devoted only the first 108 pages to the series itself. The rest of the book is filled out with thumbnail assessments of the careers of Bing, Bob, and Dorothy Lamour. These chapters themselves are not bad. They are even useful, though they tend to tread very familiar ground, but they are certainly not central to the series and seem like an appendage. Most of the information might as easily—and more fluidly—been included in a history of the stars' careers that led to the series, followed by running references to their work between films, and then an afterword on their work once the series finally ended in 1962.

Similarly, the films themselves are not as fully explored as they might have been. There is a heavy reliance on contemporary reviews. Little attempt is made to explore the films as they seem today. There is nary a whiff of a suspicion of a hint of any possible subtextual material in the screen relationship of Bing and Bob—and regardless of whether one accepts or rejects the idea that there are homosexual undercurrents (or alternatively, a kind of arrested adolescence) in those screen characters, overlooking the possibility and the fact that the issue has indeed been raised elsewhere seems wrong-headed. That little effort is made to afford the series a place in our current age also

tends to minimize it as a pop culture museum piece—an idea that is terribly at odds with seven of the liveliest comedies ever made. The book makes for a good souvenir for people who are already fans, but it fails to communicate the author's own excitement for the films and as such is not likely to create the kind of contagious enthusiasm necessary to attract the uninitiated.

Another slight flaw with *Road to Box Office* lies in the fact that it is occasionally a bit sloppy in the quotations department. Several of the dialogue examples given throughout the book are close to being right without being exact—a situation curiously slipped when the films are all readily available on tape or laserdisc. In much the same manner, it is difficult not to wonder how director Hal Walker is pegged as a comedy specialist at the time of *ROAD TO UTOPIA* (1945), since, by all accounts, it is his first film. And while it is frequently listed as being in *ROAD TO RIO*, there is no song called "For What" in the final film—certainly not one performed by the Andrews Sisters—as is claimed here, while "African Etude" and the title song in *ROAD TO ZANZIBAR* (1941) are one and the same and not two different songs as the book has it. These may be fairly minor points, but they undeniably hurt the book's value as being a definitive record.

Reservations and gripes to one side, *Road to Box Office* does indeed provide an entertaining and valuable record of the history of the Road pictures and as such it deserves a place in any self-respecting collection of film books. The worst that can be said of Mielke's project is probably a paraphrase of Jerry Colonna's line following his abortive rescue attempt in *ROAD TO RIO* "Whaddaya know? He never quite made it! Entertaining though, wasn't it?"

—Ken Hanke

JACK THE RIPPER

John Smithkey III

Key Publications, 1998

119 pages—\$15.95

Jack the Ripper: The Inquest of the Final Victim, Mary Kelly offers, as its title suggests, only one bloody slice of what is still the most famous murder spree in history, but it is meal enough for those hungry for horror. The Ripper killed at least five women of easy virtue in the late months of 1888, and possibly as many as seven, but author John Smithkey III has chosen Mary Kelly, the final victim and the only one murdered indoors, as his subject. Smithkey's interest in the case is relatively new, having blossomed during a 1994 "Jack the Ripper walking tour" hosted by renowned Ripperologist Donald Rumbelow. Nevertheless, he does not indulge in the usual beginner's guessing game as to Saucy Jack's actual identity,

but instead examines what really happened—and what many people say happened—in the early hours of November 9, 1888, in a small room in Miller's Court in the sordid district of London known as Whitechapel.

Smithkey does offer a brief history of the Ripper's work, and notes with the usual raised eyebrow that, even though the killings were never officially solved, the Scotland Yard files on the case were closed in 1892, only four years after the monstrous events sent all of London into a panic. But then he zeroes in on Mary Kelly and offers some juicy tidbits that don't often—perhaps never have—shown up in Ripper books. (It's certainly the first time I've ever encountered *The Mohawk Minstrels' Magazine of Favorite Songs and Ballads* and its publication, reproduced by Smithkey, of a little number called "A Violet From Mother's Grave—a song reportedly sung by Kelly on the night of her death.")

What else do we find between the appropriately crimson pages of this book? There's an introduction by Stewart P. Evans, coauthor of *Jack the Ripper, First American Serial Killer* (Kodansha, 1995) (Mr. Evans is obviously a man with a theory.) Readers will also discover Mary Kelly's certificate of death, reproductions of *The Illustrated Police News* reports of the murder, modern (well, fairly modern, since many of them were taken in 1967) photographs of the crime scenes, the unbelievably gruesome crime-scene photo of Kelly, a reproduction of the actual inquest papers, and the two famous (and disputed) Jack the Ripper letters.

Smithkey examines the identification of the body and considers the question of whether the victim could have been someone other than Mary Kelly. He mentions the reports that Kelly was seen well after she was supposed to have died, and even goes so far as to invoke the supernatural to explain the sightings. But the bulk of the book examines only the facts, and reports the inquest testimonies of Joseph Barnett (who lived with Kelly), Thomas Bowyer (who found the body), John McCarthy (Bowyer's employer, who sent him to collect the rent from Kelly), Elizabeth Prater (who lived in the room above Kelly's), Caroline Maxwell (who saw Kelly talking to a man on the street on the fatal night), Sarah Lewis (who heard a cry of "Murder!" and met a mysterious man with a bag), George Bagster Phillips (the surgeon called to the scene), Julia Venturney (whose great revelation seems to have been that the deceased sang Irish songs), Walter Beck (the first police officer called to the scene), and Frederick George Abberline (the Scotland Yard inspector in charge of the case). Several of these people were also questioned at the murder site, and Smithkey reproduces those statements as well.

Jack the Ripper: The Inquest of the Final Victim, Mary Kelly is self-published, but that is not in this circumstance an indication of vanity. It's an interesting book, with some interesting things to say—and even a song to sing.

—Richard Valley



Burt Lancaster is at the mercy in **CRISS CROSS** (1949)

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 68

Mexico, where Harland is going for a rest cure and where Ellen is heading for her father's memorial service. Richard soon is swept up in Ellen's intense, demanding world along with her dismayed mother Margaret (Mary Philips) and her sister Ruth (Jeanne Crain). Ellen matter-of-factly replaces her fiancé, lawyer Russell Quentin (Vincent Price, sans moustache), with the more desirable Harland. In fact, Richard is the last to know that he and Ellen are "engaged!" "Ellen always wins," one character remarks about the willful beauty. Another remark, "Nothing ever happens to Ellen," implies Ellen's sociopathic behavior: no rules apply to her. Ellen's mother finally rationalizes, "There's nothing wrong with Ellen; it's just that she loves too much." Her twisted love suffocated her father while he was alive, and now Ellen has turned her obsessive attentions to Richard.

In an attempt to isolate Richard and herself so that their love will never be disturbed, Ellen dispassionately marks those around her as her enemies and eliminates them one by one. She pretends to befriend her crippled 14-year-old brother-in-law Danny (Darryl Hickman), but in one of the most shocking sequences of the film, Ellen calmly sits in a rowboat while Danny, attempting a therapeutic swim in a lake, sinks below the surface and drowns.

Ellen becomes pregnant as a way to keep Richard tied to her, but when the vain beauty becomes jealous and resentful of the unborn child and its restricting effects on her, she merely stands at the top of a tall staircase and hurls herself to the bottom, killing the fetus. (So consumed with jealousy and singlemindedness about eliminating the baby is Ellen that it apparently never occurs to her that her fall could cripple her or mar her gorgeous face.)

When Ellen suspects that Richard and her sister Ruth have fallen in love with each other, Ellen causes another death and frames one of them for murder. It is at this late point in the film that Vincent Price returns as Russell Quentin, now the district attorney. In his lengthy courtroom scene, Price gives one of the most forceful performances of his career.

Although the courtroom proceedings and especially the final outcome are grounded more in the forties than in the vastly different nineties, *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* is still a powerful film depicting truly timeless emotions of love and love gone monstrously wrong. It is a film as layered and substantial as the title of the novel that Richard Harland writes during the course of the film—*The Deep Well*. *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* is a fascinating well that invites viewers to return over time. It can be appreciated as a melodrama, a forties-era time capsule (clothes, hairstyles, houses), a morality play, a "women's movie," and, of course, a *film noir*.

LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN won a much deserved Academy Award for Leon Shamroy's color cinematography (the

third of Shamroy's four Oscars), but it lost the awards for art direction and sound. Gene Tierney was nominated for Best Actress, but lost to Joan Crawford for *MILDRED PIERCE*. Cornell Wilde, nominated for Best Actor not for *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* but for *A SONG TO REMEMBER*, lost to Ray Milland for *THE LOST WEEKEND*. Curiously, the lavish *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* was not nominated for Best Picture or for Alfred Newman's music score. Nevertheless, it has proven to be one of the most unusual and memorable *films noir* of the forties.

—Jeff Thompson

JOURNEY INTO FEAR (1942)

This sometimes overlooked staple of *noir* has the problem of being one of those films where the authorship is in question. Who really made *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*—the credited director, Norman Foster, or was it really Orson Welles? Welles stated categorically that the film was Foster's (and that one would realize what a very good film it was, too, if it could be seen as Foster shot it before RKO did a number on it). Truthfully, it's easy to want it to be Welles' film, because it seems so right that it should be—a Mercury Production with Welles, Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead, Everett Sloane, and Welles' then inamorata Dolores Del Rio, not to mention a screenplay by Cotten himself! The fact that it was—according to Welles, at least—tampered with after the fact also makes it ripe for inclusion in the Welles filmography. But the answer is hardly that simple, though it may seem so to critics unfamiliar with the quality of Foster's B-picture work for Fox on the Charlie Chan and, even more so, on the Mr. Moto films. Anyone who does know Foster's films would have to conclude that, yes, Foster was certainly capable of a movie as good as *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*—though he was almost certainly influenced and perhaps even guided by Welles to some degree. (The echt-*noir* window-ledge shoot-out in a rainstorm is decidedly Wellesian.) The one unassailable fact about *JOURNEY INTO FEAR* is that it's a nifty, inventive, and even occasionally innovative *noir* thriller, no matter who made it and no matter what the studio did to it.

JOURNEY INTO FEAR even starts out in an unorthodox (for the time) manner, with a pre-credit sequence in which the killer, Banat (Jack Moss), readies himself to go out on a mission to the sound of an impossibly scratchy and damaged gramophone record—a sound that runs through the film like a leitmotif. From this, the film shock cuts to the stark (yes, *CITIZEN KANE*-like) main title. The story itself gets underway when a fussy little man, Kopeikin (Everett Sloane), insists on taking his "important" American colleague, Howard Graham (Cotten), on a spree to see the real Istanbul. From there, the film becomes a delightfully convoluted and quirky series of events, with even quirkier touches, such as a Turkish cabaret performer singing a foreign-language version of "Three Little Words" with dated Americanisms like "Boop Boop a Doop" grafted on. (Any bets that Spielberg saw this before he did the "Anything Goes" opening of 1984's *INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM*?) A murder in the cabaret finds Graham in the hands of the Turkish police, specifically Colonel Haki (Welles), who is convinced that Graham is himself in danger and must, for political reasons, be clandestinely shipped out of Istanbul on a far from luxurious passenger-carrying freighter—much to the chagrin of Graham, who takes none of this very seriously. Of course, the opposition are one-up on Haki and in pursuit of Graham, who must try to figure out just who on the boat is a friend and who is an enemy. The frequent lightness of tone in the screenplay, coupled with the clever performances, actually heighten the sense of *noir* grimness of the settings, the nightmarish character of the plot, and the heavily stylized approach of the lighting and camerawork.

Continued on page 73

SCREEN AND SCREEN

Continued from page 25

tricks for getting Superman airborne as were used in the serials and set the stage for the series' flying effects.

The source material for Warner's laser of *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN* shows few signs of age, with only a few scratches at reel changes; the sound is strong and clear. The disc is generously coded with 18 chapter stops.

—Jeff Allen

THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT/ GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE Turner/MGM/Image Four Sides CLV \$49.98

With the possible exception of Mark Sandrich's *BUCK BENNY RIDES AGAIN* (1940), the movies never really managed to capture Jack Benny at his best—his best film and best performance is in the very atypical *TO BE OR NOT TO BE* (1942), which has more to do with director Ernst Lubitsch and isn't a Jack Benny vehicle—so it's a bit of a surprise to find this double dose of Benny coming along. More of a surprise still is that the top feature should be the legendarily disastrous *THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT* (1945), which Benny always credited with destroying his movie stardom and at which he poked fun for most of his subsequent career. But the surprise is not wholly unpleasant, even if the marketing idea seems fully as dubious as the one that led the film to be made in the first place.

Whatever may be said for or against *THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT*, there's no getting around the fact that it is one of the damndest things ever made. Just who the film was aimed at is unclear, since it makes no use of established Benny characteristics and boasts a plot that would have been more at home with the outlandish pre-1935 works of Wheeler and Woolsey. It's possible that Warner Bros. hoped to cash in on the popular forties afterlife whimsies of *HERE COMES MR. JORDAN* (1941) and *A GUY NAMED JOE* (1943), but instead of light comedy, gentle romantic fantasy, or half-baked metaphysics, *THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT* opts for the broadest slapstick imaginable. Some of it works, a lot of it doesn't, and nearly all of it is amusingly overplayed by a dream cast of comic character actors—Allyn Joslyn, John Alexander, Reginald Gardiner, Guy Kibbee, Mike Mazurki, Franklin Pangborn, and even good old Margaret Dumont. When this jells, it's really not a bad picture at all. When it doesn't, it's still a fascinating fiasco.

The film's structure is awkward, to say the least. It has a framing story that presents Benny and Alexis Smith as members of a studio orchestra for the Paradise Coffee radio show, the sole function of which seems to have been to cover the fact that the film's actual story has no workable ending, unless it turns out to be an extended dream sequence. Even then, it doesn't really have an ending; it just

stops. The bulk of the proceedings involve the fantasy of Benny as a third-rate heavenly trumpeter, Athaniel, being sent to earth to blow the notes that herald Judgment Day. The problem is that not only is he singularly inept, but a couple of fallen angels (Joslyn and Alexander) are out to stop him at any cost. This setup isn't a bad one for comedy purposes, since it allows for all manner of tangents. However, neither the writing nor the directorial skills of Raoul Walsh (was any filmmaker ever so "miscast?") are up to the challenge of the strange blend of fantasy and surreal comedy. (Granted, it's a dream, but what kind of world is it where hotel management doesn't find it more than inconvenient that their express elevator is constantly being stolen?)

The most interesting thing about the film is that it often seems more like a feature-length Warner Bros. cartoon than a live-action movie. The idea is reinforced by the heavy use of preexisting music—Rossini's "William Tell Overture," Liszt's "Les Preludes," Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse"—on the soundtrack, much in the manner of Carl W. Stallings' musical direction on the cartoons. (And this despite an original and often too jokey Franz Waxman score.) With another director—think of Frank Tashlin's work on Bob Hope's *SON OF PALEFACE* (1952)—this might have worked, but Walsh is too heavy-handed. In fact, the elaborate and ultra-fanciful climactic gag involving a huge animated advertisement for Paradise Coffee is more nightmarish than amusing in Walsh's hands. The film is certainly fascinating and it seems less jarring now than it probably did in 1945, but it's still not a success.

The companion feature, *GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE* (1942), was

probably made because the studio had produced a successful version of the George S. Kaufman/Moss Hart play *THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER* the previous year, and so turned their attention to the next of the playwrights' offerings. The attempt to duplicate that success extended to bringing back director William Keighley, but the film was somewhat unwisely opened up by screenwriter Everett Freeman, who created a great deal of non-Kaufman and Hart expository setup, which really doesn't help the film, if only because it's not up to the material from the play.

By contrast with *HORN*, *GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE* is a very normal film—nicely mounted, well-constructed, and, while still not cashing in on Benny's established persona, making adequate use of the comedian. Once the film gets to the point of being a fairly straightforward translation of the play, it hits a nice comic stride that is handled so ably by the likes of Percy Kilbride, Hattie McDaniel, and Charles Coburn in supporting roles that it becomes perfectly delightful. The film really belongs to Percy Kilbride's Mr. Kimber, who masterminds the renovation of Benny's and Ann Sheridan's historic farmhouse. His laconic performance is invariably on target and one moment, late in the film, when he surreptitiously cold-cocks Benny's obnoxious nephew with a hammer, is in itself worth the entire film!

If nothing else, it's a pleasure to have these two films available for the first time. The transfer quality is very fine indeed, and *THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT*, with its elaborate optical work and beautiful use of models, looks especially splendid.

—Ken Hanke



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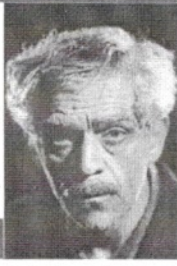
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GET REAL

Continued from page 29

This injustice, clarifies Wilde, "causes unbelievable harm to people, because you are essentially a criminal just by the way you're born. It doesn't give you a very good start in life." Patrick Wilde has every right to be angry. In fact, GET REAL started life as a London stage play called WHAT'S WRONG WITH ANGRY?. But, cautions Wilde, there is a big difference between angry and bitter. "Anger can actually be a positive emotion if you channel it in the right way."

The story of Steven Carter and his rocky relationship with the handsome, closeted John Dixon (Brad Gorton), the school "head boy" and athletic star, certainly channels all the elements in the right way. The film is rich with humor. The teen characters, who are actually played by teenagers (no John Travolta or Stockard Channing in this high school), are awarded the fully drawn depth and honesty of any adult character, and actors Charlotte Brittain, Stacy A. Hart, Kate McEnery, and Patrick Nielsen do them full justice.

Best of show is Ben Silverstone. If there has never been a screen character like Steven Carter (refreshingly angst-free about his sexuality), likewise there has never been a performance quite like Silverstone's. Pulsing with crackling humor, shot through with truth, heart-breaking in his deeply felt pain, the ultimate effect is pure joy. Says Patrick Wilde:

"Part of his acting talent is that he's just incredibly bright. He's a straight A student at Cambridge University now. Simon Shore, the director, didn't give him many notes. We didn't want to lose that instinctive and raw quality... he's a bit of a phenomenon."

Phenomenal might also describe audience reaction to GET REAL. It has already racked up many honors, including the Audience Award at the 1998 Edinburgh Film Festival, the Audience Award, Grand Jury Prize, and Cinematography Award (widescreen lensing by Alan Almond) at the 1998 Dinard Film Festival, and was an official selection at both the 1998 Toronto and 1999 Sundance film festivals.

What's next for writer Patrick Wilde? He'd like to see GET REAL shown in UK schools. "Today's straight teenagers are tomorrow's parents," Wilde reminds us. As he counts DEATH IN VENICE and "huge, big, epic historical films" among his personal favorites, will directing as well as writing films be something we can expect of him? Well, he admits, "I'm a bit of a control freak and I like telling people what to do. So it was either this... or the army."

Don't ask, don't tell—but do see GET REAL.

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 71

Despite the fine ensemble work, the honors really go to Welles' Colonel Haki, who stamps the film as his, even though he only appears at the beginning and end of the proceedings. Who but Welles could have brought this character so completely to life? Who but Welles could have gotten so much out of the vignette in which he packs Graham off on the boat, answering Graham's frankly appalled question as to whether the noises coming from the freighter are cows with a simple, "Mostly cows." Welles' Colonel Haki may be far removed from the complete characterization of his Charles Foster Kane, but it is still a fascinating performance and wholly belongs to Welles, regardless of whether or not he actually made this splendid little film.

—Ken Hanke



JANE ADAMS

Continued from page 49

compatible with my private life. In as much as my husband had become involved with our new home, a small busi-

ness, and continuing education at UCLA, he encouraged me to continue my career at a pace with which I would feel comfortable. Actually, it felt good to be involved again.

SS: This being your first picture away from Universal, what was it like?

JA: Well, it was never like being at Universal. Universal had been my home. Up to this point, most of the pictures I'd worked on were B films, produced very fast. I knew and liked everybody on the sets. It was fun, but still nothing like my time at Universal.

SS: That same year, you appeared in two Bowery Boys' entries for Monogram, *ANGELS IN DISGUISE* and *MASTER MINDS*. Did you enjoy working with Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall?

JA: Oh, it was so much fun! They were cutting up all the time—on and off the set! I don't know how they ever studied their scripts! (Laughs) They were really wonderful and a lot of fun to work with.

SS: In 1950, you costarred with Johnny Mack Brown in two Westerns made for Monogram: *LAW OF THE PANHANDLE* and *OUTLAW GOLD*.

JA: Wasn't Myron Healey in *OUTLAW GOLD*?

SS: Yes, and he also has a partial credit for writing the script.

JA: I didn't know that! It seems to me that Myron Healey attended the Playhouse when I did. He always played a heavy—because he was a heavy type. He was always asking me for a date, too! (Laughs) Johnny Mack Brown was one of my favorites. I just thought he was the nicest man in the world! He had that Southern accent and he'd been an all-American and was just full of charm—so polite and so kind. Kirby Grant was a lot like Johnny Mack Brown—a Southerner and very gracious, although I didn't get very well acquainted with him. But, I remember what Southern gentlemen they were. I don't meet that kind of man much anymore. (Laughs)

SS: You later costarred in a *Cisco Kid* movie with Duncan Renaldo and Leo Carrillo called *THE GIRL FROM SAN LORENZO*.

JA: Yes! Leo Carrillo was a great guy! He was another one who had a great sense of humor and was always horsing around on the set. He was always a lot of fun. Duncan Renaldo, on the other hand, was much more serious—but a very nice man.

SS: Your last film was 1953's *SECRET OF OUTLAW FLATS*, for Allied Artists. What made you finally decide to leave the movie industry altogether?

JA: Well, my husband returned from Korea. I did a few little things afterwards, but not very much.

SS: Did you do any more work on the stage?

JA: Never. I was a full-time military wife and that kept me busy. I could see my husband's potential, so we did a lot of entertaining and travelling.

SS: Since your retirement, have you stayed in touch with any of your fellow actors or anyone else from the industry?

JA: No, unfortunately, I haven't. Over the years, we've all just sort of drifted apart, but each year I see some of them at the Universal alumni reunion. I know there are a few of my contemporaries living around here, but I really don't see them.

SS: Of the many fine actors with whom you worked, do you have any favorites?

JA: Onslow Stevens—mainly because I had seen him do some wonderful plays at the Playhouse. He was really a very great actor in my eyes, and very talented.

SS: Of all your films, which would you say is your favorite?

JA: *HOUSE OF DRACULA*!

SS: Wow! You didn't hesitate a bit with your answer.

JA: No! (Laughs) I thought it was just wonderful!

SS: What's your impression of the film industry today?

JA: I'm not too closely acquainted with it, because I don't like violence and I don't like violent films. Like a lot of the people of my generation, I don't care much for a lot of things that are in the movies today. There are some very good films, and I love the idea that some of the people who have not been to acting school manage to do such a fabulous job. I think it's marvelous. I think the acting is natural and wonderful, but I just don't care too much for the substance.

SS: How do you fill your time these days?

JA: Well, I'm active in a church and family activities. I also do some volunteer work as well as exercising every day. I like to walk, I like to shop, and I like to see my friends. And I also have the most fabulous husband in the world! So, I really have a wonderful life.



TWILIGHT TIME

Continued from page 14

Serling's host spots for Oasis cigarettes would make a revealing historical adjunct, but are not represented here.

A digital montage of highlights from the series precedes four episodes in Volumes Five, Seven, and Nine, growing increasingly irritating with each successive appearance. Episode order rarely corresponds to the sequence listed on the boxes. In one of Panasonic's few concessions to connoisseurs, original broadcast dates are presented on a title card before each episode. The discs are not subtitled or closed-captioned.

Sound quality is adequate for normal playback volume, though amplification reveals a high noise floor. (CBS' two *TWILIGHT ZONE* CDs suggest a potential for superior sonics.) In light of the magnitude of the talents providing the scores (Bernard Herrmann, Fred Steiner, Jerry Goldsmith,

Nathan Van Cleave), a separate music and effects track should have been included.

Given the devotion *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* continues to inspire almost 40 years after its October 2, 1959 debut, Panasonic's presentation can only be described as careless. At \$24.95 per disc, the price is comparable to that of the laserdisc box sets—a usurious tariff, considering the significantly lower manufacturing costs of DVDs. Zoneheads will have to wait for the definitive home-video presentation of the greatest fantasy series ever to visit the small screen—which, considering the profitability of cyclically issued remastered editions, should just be a matter of time.



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